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LONDON

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*‘For Puir
Auld Scotland’s Sake’*

A BOOK OF PROSE ESSAYS

(With a few Poetical Fringes)

ON

Scottish Literary & Rural Subjects

BY

HUGH HALIBURTON

AUTHOR OF HORACE IN HOMESPUN.

*‘That I, for puir auld Scotland’s sake,
Some usefu’ plan or leuk could make,
Or sing a sang at least!’*

WILLIAM PATERSON, EDINBURGH
& LOVELL’S COURT, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

1887

**EDINBURGH
COLSTON AND COMPANY
PRINTERS**

TO HIS FRIEND

ROBERT BURNS BEGG, Esq.

THIS BOOK OF SCOTTISH ESSAYS

IS INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.



P R E F A C E.

THIS is a collection of Essays on Scottish Rural and Literary Subjects, which, it is hoped, will not prove uninteresting even to English readers.

The title is to be understood as expressive rather of something attempted than of anything done, to revive fading interest in the old Scottish fields of literature and rural industry.

The 'Lament for the Language,' the focus of this attempt, appeared in the author's first book, which was published,

without achieving publicity, some eight or nine years ago.

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The reader's indulgence is begged for the 'Holiday in Arcadia.' The holiday spirit was in the author's imagination, and his pen ran while he wrote.





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ESSAYS.

HERDS.

FIFTY years ago the herd was a familiar, picturesque, and important figure on all farms, but especially hill-farms, or those that to low ground for agriculture added some high land, such as a portion of a hill, for pasture. About thirty years ago he began to disappear, and now he is seldomer seen than a summer robin, and is far more scarce. You will traverse entire parishes, indeed whole shires, and never once come across him. The introduction of fencing, or of a more complete system of it, has enabled the farmer to dispense with his services, and, like Othello's, his occupation is gone.

The sloe or hawthorn hedgerow, the drystone dyke, the paling, and the wire-fence have superseded him ; these now-a-days discharge the duties erewhile undertaken by the ubiquitous herd.

It is the object of this paper to recall the char-

acter and occupation of the herd, to indicate his position in the economy of the farm, and his relation to other departments of farm life and work, and generally to describe his condition before personal knowledge of the subject has quite passed away with living memory.

The herd's chief duty was to prevent his charge from straying, to keep them at their proper pasture, and to take good care that they did not break and devour the rising or ripening crops. On a farm of, say, 200 acres, one-half arable land and one-half hill, and giving employment to two pairs of horses, the services of two herds would be required. Speaking generally, we may say that on hill-farms there would be one herd for every pair of horses. Thus a hill-farm of 400 acres of mixed land would afford work for four ploughmen and as many herds. Where two herds were employed on a farm, their variety of pastoral work was usually so divided between them that one looked after the milk cows, while the other tended the barren or black cattle—in rustic language, 'the nowte or yeld beas.' The former—the dairy herd, as he may be called—was a regular member of the farm community, remaining the whole year round, winter as well as summer, and holding, therefore, higher rank than the other, who was sometimes known as 'the spring herd,' from the season

when his engagement commenced. His engagement ran to Martinmas, when the little fellow—he was not seldom a very young boy—relapsed into the urchin life from which he had temporarily emerged, and went back to taws and school-training till the ensuing spring. A herd's charge would consist of thirty animals, sometimes more, sometimes less, of the bovine species; a pig or two would occasionally be thrown in, or a pet lamb, or, but more rarely, a goat. The shepherds, it is needless to say, were quite a distinct class of farm-servants from the herds. On some farms a horse-herd was to be found, whose pastoral duties were for the most part discharged in the earlier and later portions of the day, when the horses were allowed to be at grass, but continued all day if the weather was unfavourable for the particular kind of work upon which they happened to be employed. He was accordingly sometimes known as 'a wet-weather herd.' When his charge were taken in hand by the ploughmen for their ordinary task of carting or cultivation, the horse-herd was made use of during the day by being set to what was known as women's work, such as hoeing turnips, cutting thistles or *weeboes* (ragwort), or doing odd jobs according to the season of the year. In the end of summer and beginning of harvest there were always a few weeks of *idleset*, or idleness, for

the horses on the farm at which time the horse-herd fully answered to his name. He might then have from eight to twelve horses, foals included, to keep at pasture from morning till night. The introduction of the reaping-machine has taken their long annual holiday from Dick and Damsel.

The Highlands supplied a large proportion of the herds on lowland hill-farms. They sent down their supply in shoals at the end of autumn to the feeing markets of such towns as Amulree, Crieff, and Stirling, in the shape of stout-limbed spirited lads of from fourteen to even eighteen years of age, designed for the larger charges of big farms, and wiry, sharp-eyed boys of from ten to thirteen, intended for the smaller charges and more domestic life of moderate-sized and little farms. A few would appear in the native kilt and plaid, sometimes bonnetless, but with a shock of hair that made ample amends for the want of any extraneous head-covering. Most of them, however, came equipped as to their lower limbs for a Lowland life. Among the Highland youth who offered themselves in the Perthshire feeing markets, perhaps the commoner names were Macdonald, Mackenzie, MacEwan, Menzies, Robertson, and Sinclair. A smaller proportion of the herd supply was drawn from the families of the ploughmen and cottar-folk in the farm neighbourhood. But, as a rule, the son of a ploughman

found a readier engagement on a farm other than that upon which his father was employed.

A herd's fee varied, of course, with the term of his service. It consisted partly of maintenance and partly of money. But as may be surmised, the monetary payment was small. A sum of twenty-five shillings was the ordinary wage of a herd who gave his services from May to Martinmas; if he engaged for the whole year he might expect an extra pound, but would accept fifteen shillings. He was almost always well fed—a farmhouse being usually a good 'meat house,' or a 'rough house,' as it was not inexpressively called; but the housing was of the barest, and the washing amounted probably to a weekly shirt. Engagements entered into at Martinmas were for the year; but half-yearly covenants, made in March or April, say at Luke's Fair in the town of Perth, were common enough. Most of the engagements were made at markets. The farmer, or his deputy, who was either his wife, a neighbouring farmer, or his foreman, was guided mainly by his eye in making selection, though, of course, a few questions such as the situation suggested were put and answered. What was the candidate's name? How old was he? Had he yet acted as herd? And if so, where, and how long? A sixpence of *arles*, or earnest money, given and taken, and the

bargain was closed and mutually binding. There was no writing ; often, almost always, no witness ; the master might mark the accepted fee in his pocket-book, or would simply trust to the boy's memory and good faith ; and yet there was rarely, if ever, a dispute when the term of service was up, and the fee came to be paid. The herd came home to the farm about a fortnight after he had taken the *arles*, except in the case of a Highland herd, who came home at once with his master. Some of the Highland herds came to their new quarters with appetites of rare keenness, with stomachs of unbounded capacity. There is an anecdote of an Ochil cock-laird of economical habits thinking the very genius of famine had come to his town in the guise of a Highland herd, and taking means to 'wring in the tautit herd,' as he phrased it, by hastily ordering a huge melder of peas to the mill.

The herds, like Apollo, were ever young. A herd over twenty was a phenomenon. What became of them ? Some who found the pastoral life completely congenial to their nature became shepherds ; the ranks of the ploughmen absorbed others ; a good proportion went to trades, and learned to be wheelwrights and shoemakers, or, if they were exceptionally stout and strong, masons and blacksmiths.

The social relation of the herd to the other farm servants, and especially to the domestics,

depended on himself. Being young, and in many instances far from his father's house, he was hospitably offered kindly or, at least, frank treatment. The mistress was, perhaps, the most considerate friend of the dairy herd. It was, to be sure, her interest to be on good terms with him, since good herding might and often did mean a good dairy. It was the interest of the adult servants also to stand well with the herd. He went messages, fetched plough-irons from the smithy of an evening, or carried shoes to the shoemaker's for repairs; ran to the nearest farm for the newspaper, or delivered a rustic *billet-doux*, etc. He was often, indeed, *sair trachled* (i.e., sorely overtasked with travel) by the thoughtlessness of his elders, themselves too tired at close of day to "go their own errands." One sin only was unpardonable to the herd by his fellow-servants, the sin of carrying tales to headquarters—in one emphatic word, the sin of *clyping*. If he did not *clype*, he was well-treated; if he did, Bawtie's¹ life was lovely in comparison.

The general character of the herds, considered in its moral aspect, was on the whole very good. As a rule they were honest and obedient, showed a full average of the ingenuousness of youth, and in point of intelligence were not by any means so stupid as they

¹ A dog's.

looked. Under a stirk-like expression of countenance was often concealed a shrewdness of penetration or an appreciation of humour that, as disclosed to a friendly and familiar listener, would have astonished the unsuspecting subject—fine lady or fine gentleman, as the case might be—upon whom it had been exercised. Their blockishness was often assumed as a silent protest against an affected or insincere demeanour, which they could not expose, but which they quite comprehended and thoroughly despised. The Highland herds, as a class, were particularly well-behaved. Their good conduct was, no doubt, to some extent owing to natural goodness of character, but was partly also the result of a lively sense of their dependence for comfort and happiness upon the little world into which, far from their own homes, they were suddenly thrown ; and, of course, in the case of the younger Highland herds, it was partly the consequence of their youth, and the amiable timidity arising from inexperience of evil.

The garb of the representative herd was suited for out-of-door work, rough weather, and unreserved use, misuse, or abuse. It consisted of a suit of fustian twilled for jacket and waistcoat, and ribbed for *breeks*. A broad blue bonnet of the Tam o' Shanter type furnished a husk for the head. It was, however, quite dispensable. The feet were bare in summer ; and

no inconsiderable part of the herdie's long-day leisure was consumed in extracting thorns from inaccessible regions on the back of either heel, or among the clefts of the remoter toes. A grey blanket-cloak, or a plaid, invariably of nondescript hue, was as usual as it was useful in wet and broken weather. It was, in the absence of sheltering hedgerows, his only covert from the tempest, unless, indeed, he drove his charge to the hollow of a hazel glen, or watched them from the near edge of a fir plantation. In the latter situation the storm-driven traveller hurrying past caught from the highway a glimpse of his freckled countenance, dashed with rain-drops, yet calmly peering out from his blanket hood with all the philosophy of a Franciscan.

The herd's prime duties afield were two in number—to keep the cattle under his charge from the victual, as the growing grain, whatever its variety, was called ; and to keep them from lying down. His shout of menace or reproach was usually sufficient to restrain Crummie, when, in the course of her legitimate browsing, she flung up her head at the forbidden border, and began to temporise with temptation by sniffing towards the milky corn or the fragrant clover. The black cattle were less obedient. If they were suffered to get to the border they were certain to cross it.

To them the temptation was irresistible ; they would make a defiant plunge into the crop-field, and appropriate its vegetable sweets with a swiftness that showed how conscious they were that their opportunity was short and their punishment sure. Not seldom, when turned, they would stretch their neck for a parting mouthful, careless that by so doing they caught the descending stick. Swinging round their heavy heads they would shake off the pain, and return, masticating as they went, to narrower bounds and normal behaviour. It was surprising how well-conducted they were when the herd was near them and on the alert, and how speedily they gravitated into mischief, if he went for a minute to cut a switch in the copse, or ran over the knowe to meet a neighbour-herd for a moment at the march. It was less the quantity they devoured with their mouths, though that was not little, than the area they broke, or rather *brokit*—that is, made refuse of—with their four-footed bulk that made their raids so destructive and so little to be desiderated. Next to letting the cattle stray into the corn, a herd's most serious neglect of duty was allowing the milk-cows to lie down or roam restlessly about the field without feeding. Their refusal of pasture soon told on the dairy, and the negligence of the herd, though not directly detected, was

discovered by inference from the diminished milk-pail. It was needless for the herd to protest that he could not *gar* the cows feed. True, the proverb declared that while one man might take a horse to the water, ten men could not make him drink ; but it made no mention of cows at pasture. If the herd took them to pasture, he *bude*—that is, behoved—to make them eat. They might be like Macfarlane's geese in preferring their play to their meat ; but the herd was held bound to alter their inclination and get them to prefer their meat to everything. So dogmatised the head of the dairy, and there was nothing to be gained by chopping logic with her.

The herd's work, like that of all toilers in the open air, depended on the daylight. It was, perhaps, more exactly in proportion to the amount of daylight than any other kind of out-door labour. The length of his day varied, of course, with the season. At its longest in summer it was not less than the sixteen hours between five in the morning and nine in the evening ; at its shortest in mid-winter it was not more than the eight hours between eight and four. There was a break of two hours, beginning at noon, in the long summer day, during which, while the maids milked the *hawkies*¹ and the hawkies ruminated, the herd was partly employed in cleaning out—tech-

¹ Primarily, *white-faced* cows ; then cows generally.

nically, *mucking*—the byres. In the winter season his principal duty was to carry to the stalls at which the cattle were chained, their proper and regular supplies of provender. The winter work began at daylight with the cleaning out of the byres, an operation which might continue till eleven; straw was then carried to the cows, turnips to the fat cattle—the *feds* as they were briefly called; at two they were watered; then foddered; and bedded at four or five. The herd's winter task, it will thus be seen, was more constant and exacting, and much more of the nature of drudgery than the summer work, which carried with it the delights of long leisure, scenic surroundings, and, as seems in retrospect, and as seemed, too, perhaps, to many an outsider—an Arcadian air as of a placidly pleasant eternal existence. Let those who have been herds, and who are now too proudly situated socially to own it, look back on some bright though long-vanished summer, which came to them on hills among the kine, and say in their hearts whether they were not then nearer a pagan Eden than they have ever been since. 'König ist der Hirt-enknabe,' sang Heine, and Heine's little herd-boy was a representative one, not by any means confined to the Harz, but rife on Scottish hill-farms half a century ago, and common to-day in the dales and on the sæters of the Dovrefeld.

The herd's food was wholesome, almost always plentiful, and in no respect inferior to the ordinary fare of the farm community. Plain or appetising, uniform or varied, it was always welcome to the hungry stomach; it was 'kitchened wi' fresh air,' as honest Allan happily puts it. The staple fare in all ranks of rustic life was porridge and milk—a model diet viewed all round. Even in the matter of serving an enchanting simplicity attends it:—
 'A' ye need is ae lang spune an' elbow room.'
 Its praises have never been better sung than by the clever author of 'Law Lyrics':—

'For makin' flesh an' buildin' banes
 There ne'er was siccan food for weans,
 It knits their muscles, steeve as stanes,
 An' teuch as brasses,
 Fills hooses fu' o' boys wi' brains
 An' rosy lasses.'

One is, half-seriously, inclined to endorse the warning of his apostrophe:—

'Puir parritch ! noo thou'rt scant respectit ;
 For frizzled fare thou'rt aft neglected ;
 But Grecian Sparta sune was wreckit
 'Mang drinkin' horns,
 An' Scotia's thrissle may be sneckit
 When thee she scorns !'

Breakfast of porridge and milk was eaten *al fresco* in summer from a wooden bowl or *caup*,

brought to the field, where the herd hungrily awaited it, by one of the maids some time between seven and eight. He ate his dinner in the farm kitchen with the other servants at noon. The viands at this meal were usually kail or barley broth, pork, and pease-bread, oat-cakes, or barley bannocks. On returning to the field at two, he took with him 'a piece and cheese,' on which he stayed his stomach till the gloamin'. He came home to a supper of porridge and milk. The following rough lines give a graphic representation of the inhuman hunger of a north-country herd, sharp-set with the keen air of the Buchan braes:—

'The herdie-dirdie cam' down the hill, hungry,
 hungry;
 Quo' the hirdie-dirdie—"Far's my growl?" (*gruel*).
 Quo' the deemie—"It's there i' the bowl;
 The black chicken and the grey
 Hae been pickin' at it a' day!"
 He up wi' his club
 An' gied it on the lug;
 "Peek, peek!" quo' the chicken;
 "Will-a-wins!" quo' the hen;
 "Little maitter!" quo' the cock—"ye should
 hae gane to your bed when I bade ye."

There is abundance of both characterisation and action in this little drama, and no want of a moral.¹

¹ I am indebted to a correspondent of the *Scotsman* for the following scene, humorously illustrative of the inhuman hunger of a herd:—The farmer had come into the 'kitchie' as the herd

Lying, laziness, and uncleanness were the vices to which herds were most prone. A herd's lie was not regarded so seriously as a ploughman's, because of his youth; but a detected falsehood was long in being 'let down' upon him—he was continually reminded of it, with a possible view to his future truthfulness. Laziness mostly manifested itself in lying late a-bed of a morning. In those cases where the herd slept in a garret of the farm-house, he was usually awakened by the maids calling to him, not seldom repeatedly, from below. He was often dismissed to bed of an evening sooner than he cared to go, so that he might be up and about next day in good time. This dismissal, sometimes plain and peremptory, was sometimes none the less effective that it was quaintly implied. 'Ye'll need the blanket wi' ye the morn, Wull,' the farmer would say quietly, in a pause of the conversation, from the ingle, meaning that Wull would not have sleep enough in bed if he did not go to it at once, and would have to make up for it in the field. There was now and again, especially in cold and showery spring weather, little inducement was about to begin supper, and noticing a big fly in the herd's bowl of milk, he said, 'Loon, lift oot that flee oot o' your milk.' 'It's nae sae deep; it can wade oot,' said the herd. Taking the hint, the farmer addressed his wife with, 'Oman, gie that loon mair milk.' Whereupon the herd muttered in an audible *aside*, 'There's plenty o' milk for a' the parritch.'

beyond a sense of duty, to rise to clothes that had been soaked the previous evening, and were still damp and raw in the morning. In winter a herd's laziness would, but extremely rarely, take the form of starving the cattle. The following conversation, which is no imaginary one, will furnish a reason, rather naively given, for this particular form of laziness:—

FARMER—Laddie, thae beas are fa'en terribly awa; d'ye gie them plenty o' meat?

HERD—If a' gae them plenty, I wad ne'er get them muckit!

In the matter of personal cleanliness the herd was left very much to himself. His face was seldom washed, except by the rain; and his hair, usually long and matted, with elf-locks creeping down his cheeks and giving a weird look to a thin sharp face, was as guiltless of comb as his jacket was of clothes brush. He was all the weirder if he happened at the same time to be red-headed, ringle-eyed, and freckled. In summer he ran barefoot, and the farmer's wife would insist on his washing his feet at the water trough in the yard every night, in order to save her sheets. Occasionally in very hot summers he would enjoy the healthy luxury of a dip in a deep pool. His pastimes were bird-nesting, fish-catching, either with hand or hook; swopping—that is, exchanging—knives, or whips, plaited by himself with

cord, with brother herds in the neighbourhood; learning a ballad or a song; and practising the rural minstrelsy of fife, or whistle, or chanter. He was no mean naturalist, had an extensive and minute knowledge of the forms, habits, and haunts of birds, and was an adept at the water-side, quite up to the testimonial which Darsie Latimer gives him in the third letter of Redgauntlet. 'An impudent urchin,' wrote Latimer, 'a cowherd, about twelve years old, without either brogue or bonnet, bare-legged, and with a very indifferent pair of breeches—how the villain grinned in scorn at my landing-net, my plummet, and my gorgeous flies! I was at last induced to lend the rod to the sneering rascal to see what he could make of it; and he half filled my basket in an hour.' Some herds were really good musicians, and would make the wilderness vocal for many yards around with the simple cadences of 'Hielant Laddie,' or the intricate wail of 'The Flowers o' the Forest,' while they sat on sunny knowes and blew into pipe or whistle. Ballad-learning was sometimes reluctantly exchanged for a Psalm Book or the Shorter Catechism by way of preparation for Sabbath evening. On that night the rule in many farm-houses was *No Psalm no Supper*.

When the herd had brought his cows home

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from pasture in the dusk of the summer evening, his task for the day was ended. He had nothing further to do but to eat his supper, wash his feet, and go to bed and blissful oblivion. The felicities of communicated love, which made the hour between gloaming and the mirk precious to others, were not yet for him. His bed, if it was not in one of the bothies, was probably in a stable-loft. In the course of the night the horses no doubt champed and stamped and snorted, as their manner is, but without breaking the repose or at least alarming the tired little sleeper above them. Sometimes he was lodged for the night in a garret of the farmhouse. As may be supposed, the garret was sparsely furnished. It probably contained no more than his bed, and a form or an old chair. A cord of plovers' eggs perhaps adorned one of the walls, or a more varied string of specimens of well-nigh all the wild birds' eggs, large and little, of the locality festooned with fairy grace the one dusty window recess; and almost certainly a handful of slender hazel switches, or a bundle of thicker ash sticks, stood in a corner to *win'*, or season. The herd was a great authority on sticks, and, it must be confessed, a deadly enemy to young timber. If there was a good stick in the plantation, his eye would detect it and his hand appropriate it. He never reckoned his equipment for a fair

complete without a creditable stick. It was his insignium of office, his sceptre ; and the best *kent* in his collection was kept for the fair.

The fair, which almost invariably included a market for cattle, was a great institution fifty years ago. It was more frequently held and more numerously attended than now, and far more general among the towns. It was a poor town that could not boast of an annual fair. To many a placid village of the plain and monotonous mountain hamlet it was the big event of their year, to which even the great winter holiday of Hansel Monday was of inferior importance. It was the landmark of the months, an epoch for the orderly regulation of the days. All events were dated from it, backward or forward as the case required. The aged patriarch died so many days before the fair ; the bairn was baptised so many Sabbaths after it. In short, the villagers were anticipating it half a year before it was due, and for six months after it was past they were recalling it.

It was mostly at these fairs that the farmer disposed of the surplusage of his live stock, and a great delight entered the heart of the herd when he received a commission to attend his master to the fair. It is needless to say that the auction sales of cattle, and indeed all kinds of bestial, so prevalent now, were then unknown. There were two great markets in the

farmer's year,—one in the early spring, and one at the back-end, that is, at the end of autumn. At the latter, cattle rising, say, three years old, and now ready for the stall, were taken off the grass and driven to Falkirk Tryst or to Perth, or it might be to Kinross Luke-fair to be there disposed of. They were probably stall-fed for three months after this change of owner. At the spring markets it was chiefly young cattle that were for sale, and the sellers were usually the small farmers, who were then in need of money to meet the rent term, the buyers being the better-off farmers who had pasture. Occasionally a farmer with a byreful of twenty or thirty cattle, or with eighty or a hundred fat sheep to sell, would advertise a roup to gather the butchers, but more frequently the butcher would come round by private invitation, and take what he wanted, if a price was agreed on.

Of these methods of cattle selling, the open market only, and not always, affected the little world of the herd. To take to or bring from the fair a drove of cattle was a rare and an agreeable change in the simple round of his duties. It was a near peep at the world of men. It was more: it was actually playing a part, an official and no idle part, in the great world's drama. What he saw and what he heard would be the subject of much private meditation for weeks after in the grassy wilder-

ness, and of much delightful interrogation on the part of his less favoured brethren, the herds of the neighbourhood. He would dramatise his news for their entertainment. For them too he may have had a few small trusts to execute, such as the purchase of a pistol, or a picture-book, or a knife that could cast fire. In no case, perhaps, would the article exceed the purchasing power of a shilling. A pistol was, of course, a great acquisition; but, as the use of fire-arms was a forbidden enjoyment to young boys, the pleasure of the pistol lay chiefly in the possession of it. To use it even once was almost certainly to forfeit it for ever. The want of powder was no cause of its silence. The herd, its happy owner, would hover on the perilous edge of the whinstone quarry where blasting operations were in progress, till his hawk's eyes had discovered and noted the secret of the powder depot. He could afterwards at his leisure help himself from the tin flask, in the absence of the workmen. It was only to the *halfin* or horse herd that the farmer entrusted his blunderbuss when the crows were thought to need thinning or scaring.

The herd was, of course, a poacher, though on a small scale; and at the back end of the year he kept himself in pocket-money by clandestine transactions with carriers and cadgers. He knew the hare runs and the rabbit bur-

rows even better than the gamekeeper himself, and could set a snare after a few lessons and essays with any Tom Cordery of them all. He knew the exact distance from the *slap* or breach, and the precise height in finger breadths above the ground, at which to fix his gin, so as to make an artistic certainty of 'tumbling' unsuspecting Maukin as she ambled lightly along, accompanied by the shadow of her own ears, in the moonlight. A prime hare might fetch him a shilling, and a pair of bunnies were good for perhaps tenpence; but the larger reward lay in the consciousness of a skill sufficient to circumvent the wary animals of the wild, and to elude the vigilance of their self-styled preservers. A mean advantage was sometimes taken of his youth by rascally cadgers, who, under pretence of being shocked at the implied avowal of his illegal practices, would confiscate the contraband to their own benefit, and threaten the clutch of the law to stifle any outcry at the injustice. But most of the cadgers found it to be to their continued advantage to encourage the traffic, and preferred the rascality of cheating the herd out of a fair price to that of robbing him outright.

The herd's relations with the members of the farm household have already been remarked on. He was usually on intimate and friendly terms with the mistress; she had 'aye a wark

wi' the herd.' His intimacy with the farmer, if less demonstrative, was often not less real. He felt the protective influence of his master's presence among the younger ploughmen, who were sometimes inclined to treat him with the tyranny of superior strength. A pointed word from the master at the right moment would effectually check the tyranny: it might be— 'Sandie, ma man! when ye hae servants o' your ain, ye'll ken better hoo to use them; in the meantime, dinna lift a hand again to a servant o' mine!' And both Sandie and the herd duly appreciated the quiet but forcible rebuke. The easy relation of the herd to his master would sometimes manifest itself in a playful practical joke, as when the herd spread his blanket on his master, whom he caught asleep on the shady side of a hay-cock, by way of retort to his master's hint of the previous evening, 'Laddie, if ye dinna gang to your bed, ye'll need the blanket to the field wi' ye the morn!' His relations with the farmer's children were of the most loyal and enduring character, especially with the boys of his own age. He was willing to concede an inferiority in the family, not quite so abject as that of Bob Jakin to Tom Tulliver, if he was allowed in return the superiority which he merited in the field. With his brother-herds he was also commonly friendly. Fights,

fierce ramlike combats, in the outraged solitude of some glen or brae-side would, however, occur, and the apparition of a black eye or a bloody nose in the farm-kitchen towards evening would vaguely chronicle the encounter. The *casus belli* was probably traceable to the rustic propensity of 'calling names,' or jeering. Neighbouring herds, strangers as yet to each other—for their enmity usually vanished on their better acquaintance—would hollo to each other provocatively from misty hill-top to hill-top. Here is a specimen of the manner in which they might introduce themselves to each other, shouting out antiphonally across some severing glen :—

FIRST HERD—Hielander !

SECOND HERD—Lallanter !

FIRST HERD (mockingly)—Whar' was she porn ?

SECOND HERD—Up in ta Hielants.

FIRST HERD—Amang the short corn.

SECOND HERD—Fine lifin' there.

FIRST HERD (derisively)—Syboes an' leeks ! Ye lang-leggit billie-goat wantin' the breeks !

The struggles of the Highland herd with the Lowland language were often a cause of amusement to the south-country herd, and sometimes an occasion of quarrel between them. Thus, when Donald Menzies was well stung all over, both above and below the kilt, by the bees whose bike he was plundering, and when he earnestly denounced them as

'tanned gaugers,' it was not illogical that Lowland Tam should be tickled into laughter by the tone and the expression, and be pitched into for his unbrotherly levity.

Exclusive of a day at the fair in summer time, which was a rare chance, the herd's holiday season was limited to Hansel Monday, the first Monday of the new year. He rose earlier on that day, received from his master a sixpence by way of hansel, along with a glass of whisky, weakened and sweetened, and laid a trifling stake or two at the raffle in the neighbourhood. His ordinary work had still to be done, as on other days. There was also the expectation of a visit from his father, if his home was at a distance, to brighten the year. The father, if from the Highlands, was probably well-mounted on a pony, as sleek as good feeding could make him. The visit was in the slack season of summer, and was generally paid with the one purpose of seeing his son. The Highland herd's father was not seldom in better circumstances than his son's master. He might be a farmer, conjoint lessee, or appropriator of a hill in the North, on which his individual property in sheep might include twenty-five or thirty score. While one of his sons was a herd on a Lowland hill farm, another, who had himself been a herd, might be a 'placed minister' of the Word, and a man

of considerable culture—a 'herd weel-learnt upo' the Beuk,' as Burns puts it.

Scholarship is relative to place and time. Fifty years ago in most farm towns the herd was reckoned a scholar if he could read, and a paragon for whom a kirk was building if he did not need to spell. While ability to read was thus regarded with respect by the rustics, the present advantage of the accomplishment was little realised by its owner, and was apt to fall into disuse in circumstances practically unfavourable to its maintenance. Such circumstances existed in most farm communities. With the key of knowledge in their hand, they made little use of it, except to take credit for having it. In the ordinary rustic mind reading was associated with religious services and Sunday exercises. It was actually a synonymous term with family worship. The farmer, no doubt, had an occasional glance at a newspaper, but it was less, perhaps, in the way of business, or in realisation of his membership in the body politic, than for recreation, and that species of reputation among his neighbours which in his soliloquies he described as 'look's pairt.' He was probably one of a club of six or eight persons—farmers, masons, tailors, etc.—belonging to the district who took in a weekly newspaper, kept it each for a day, and acted

strictly on the rule, 'Send for it when it is your turn, or go without it.' The herd was, of course, the messenger, his errand, when it occurred, opening the day. The farmer would look over the news in the early summer morning at the top of the rig, or, finding an interesting horror in some large-lettered announcement, would sit down on a fiel'-dyke to imbibe it before breakfast.

From the condition of his occupation, which, while it necessitated solitude, allowed copious leisure, the herd was usually a thinker, dealing not only with the material things of natural history, but with such metaphysical mysteries as perplexed and haunted the mind of Wordsworth's Wanderer when as yet he was

'A herdsman on the lonely mountain-tops.'

Strange ideas would run from unknown sources into his mind; and the boy might have glimpses of Berkeleyism, or a feeling of Pantheism, which awed him, and was unuttered. Even if he had been able to express it, its incongruity with his waking life would have frightened him into silence. If he was at all touched with the fever of study he had ample opportunity of nursing it. Kindly cottars were willing to oblige the herd with any tattered literature their humble shelves contained. The 'bole' in the farm-kitchen, which may have held in its dim recesses a few Puritanical sermons,

or an odd volume or two of old Scottish poetry, or at least a bundle of chap-books, was, of course, free to his exploration. And at worst, if there was no parish library to expatiate in, a little economy, combined with a little successful poaching, was sufficient to procure food for his mind, and provide scope for his growing imagination. Like the Gentle Shepherd, he could sit with Shakespeare on the braes, and 'crack wi' Kings.' Like Wordsworth's herdsman, he could gaze from his solitude among the hills upon 'that mighty orb of song, the divine Milton.' Like James Fergusson he could institute from amongst the stirks an acquaintance with the stars; or like John Brown¹ on the heights above Abernethy, peruse the New Testament in its native characters.

The herd, left much to his own resources in a position of responsibility, early became self-reliant, and was emphatically 'auld-farrant'—that is, he was sagacious beyond his years. His reputation for sagacity encouraged him in the exercise of his wits, and a conversation with a herd—but a herd, observe, in his element, the field, and girt with the authority of his office—was generally a treat, and much sought after by his elders. He was a true artist in talk, possessing that indispensable

¹ It was John Brown's mother who, while her son was still a herd-boy, saw in a vision *the craws fleein' owre his kirk*.

quality to the finest reaches of art, the repose of self-command. His solitude gave him a zest for intercourse, and his sense, the growth of much self-communion, taught him the rare virtue of restraint which is necessary to intelligent, pleasant, and piquant conversation. It was sometimes a quarrel among the farmer's sons which should have the privilege of carrying the herd's meal to him to the hill. The value of the privilege was less that it gave escape from other work—for all had to work—than that it promised at least 'a crack wi' the herd,' and perhaps a story from him, or some quaintly-suggestive interrogations. The young Kinross-shire poet, Michael Bruce, was such a herd in his boyhood, the attractiveness of whose company and conversation the Laird of Kinneston in his old age was wont to recall.

The religious instruction of the herd was in the hands of his master, who stood to him in place of parent and teacher. From the nature of his duties, which were clerically conceded to be works of necessity, the herd could hardly be expected to go to church. He never or rarely went. Never or rarely had he supervision by the minister. If the minister called at the farm in the order of his annual visitation, the herd saw none of him, except, perhaps, his black coat like a blot in the distant sunshine. He was, as a rule, far from sorry to

escape closer acquaintance. Indeed he would as soon have faced the deil as the minister. There was, however, a difference even to the herd between Sabbath and the secular days sufficient to mark the passage of the weeks. On the evening of Sunday—more correctly, on ‘Sawbath nicht’—the farmer in all likelihood conducted what was known as family exercise. The expression meant the assembling of the farm household — children, servants, and ‘strangers,’ if any, ‘within the gates,’ in the roomy farm-kitchen, for the double purpose of instruction and devotion. The instruction might be conducted by three processes—reading a chapter of the Bible, each person in turn toiling steadily or stumbling through a verse; reciting a portion of the metrical Psalms; and answering questions out of the Shorter Catechism—a Catechism, by the way, which to the juvenile mind shamefully belied its name. Such a scene at question-time as the following was by no means uncommon :—

OLD FARMER (after scolding Jock the herd for the twentieth time for letting the cows amang the corn)—
‘Noo, we’ll tak’ the Questions. Whaur did we leave aff last ook (*week*)?’

JOCK (who was not specially asked, and upon whom a scolding lay lightly)—‘I was past “All mankind,” maister!’

OLD FARMER (eyeing the incorrigible over the top of his horn-bound glasses)—‘Deed, Jock, ye was past all mankind afore I saw ye!’

It should, perhaps, be explained that the answer to the question, 'Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?' begins with the words, 'All mankind.'

The devotional part of the exercise was a sung Psalm and a spontaneous prayer. It was a worship sometimes meagre and mechanical enough, often sincere and reverential. We know how Burns's 'priest-like father' led the religious services of his humble family of a 'Saturday Nicht.' There were many such cottar saints in Scotland. We know, too, how Burns himself discharged the religious duties of his household when first he set up as a farmer. Writing from Mossiel on the 22d of February 1786, the poet thus describes the constitution and condition of his house by way of answer, as he says, 'to the usual mandate sent by a surveyor of the public taxes:'—

'For men I've three mischeevous boys,
Run deils for rantin' an' for noise ;
A gadsman ane, a thresher t'other,
Wee Davoc huds the nowte in futher.
I rule them, as I ocht, discreetly,
An' aften labour them completely :
An' aye on Sundays duly, nightly,
I on the Carritch targe them tichtly ;
Till, faith, wee Davoc's grown sae gleg,
Though scarcely langer than your leg,
He'll screed ye aff *Effectual Calling*
As fast as ony in the dwelling.'

Burns catechising his herd, half-seriously, half-humorously, in the tenets of Calvinism!—the subject is one for Erskine Nicol. The custom did not cease with Burns's day—it has still a clinging hold in many of the rural districts of Scotland. The farmer of fifty years ago, especially if he was an elder of the kirk, would sometimes give an exposition of Scripture admirably suited to the circumstances of his people; and sometimes obedience to the command to search the Scriptures would degenerate into fruitless genealogical quests, the discovery of frivolous coincidences, and even the framing of farcical conundrums. This species of Biblical research required answers, and received them such as they were, to questions of which the following may serve as a sample:—Who was David's mother? Where are top-knots mentioned in the Gospel?¹ What was the name of the dog that licked Lazarus's sores?²

Young as he was, the herd, less rarely than might be imagined, felt the fever of the grand passion. He might be 'o'er lugs in love' before he was well entered into his teens. It depended on the susceptibility of his nature and the female society of the farm. Mary, the farmer's daughter or maid in the household, arrayed in the charms of 'complete fifteen,' was

¹ 'Let him that is on the house-top *not* come down!'

² 'Moreover, the dog,' etc.

a dangerous neighbour to an impressionable heart of equal age like Davie's, more especially if love for Davie 'laughed in her e'e.' It was in the harvest-field that the boy Burns first felt the bewildering magic of female loveliness and the impulse of poetical fervour; but that was only an accident of place. It might as well have been on the pasture hill. Like our herd, he was then 'beardless, young, and blate;' yet his heart-strings were tingling in delightful pain with the witchery of 'twa smiling een,' that at the same time

'Abashed him and dashed him
And made him feared to speak.'

Of all the herds of Scotland it was not just Reuben Butler and Jeanie Deans that made one plaid serve two as a protection from the falling rain, while they watched their respective charges from the grassy *balk* that was their mutual boundary. The experience was not an ordinary one in herd life, but neither was it so very exceptional. More than one bonnie herd lassie might have tender memories of 'the broom of the Cowdenknowes,' or might sing with Tannahill's Jean—

'Blythe was the time when he fee'd wi' my faither, O,
Happy were the days when we herded thegither, O,
Sweet were the hours when he row'd me in his plaidie, O,
And swore to be mine, my dear Hieland laddie, O!' ...

Or the passion of the little herd for his master's

daughter, whom he instinctively knew to be 'throned beyond his reach,' as George Eliot puts it, may have been like Whittier's in the Western Hemisphere, one-sided and secret, never spoken, never even suspected by its object, yet a life-long possession, faded but still fragrant, and cherished in the afternoon of life with peculiar tenderness.

' I wonder if she thinks of me
And how the old time seems,—
If ever the pines of Ramoth wood
Are sounding in her dreams ?

' I see her face, I hear her voice ;
Does she remember mine ?
And what to her is now the boy
Who fed her father's kine ?

' O playmate in the golden time !
Our mossy seat is green,
Its fringing violets blossom yet,
The old trees o'er it lean.

' The winds, so sweet with birch and fern,
A sweeter memory blow ;
And there in spring the veeries¹ sing
The song of long ago.

' And still the pines of Ramoth wood
Are moaning like the sea—
The moaning of the sea of change
Between myself and thee !'

¹ The veery is the American thristle.



*AUTHORSHIP OF 'CHRIST'S
KIRK ON THE GREEN.'*

THE members of the Scottish Text Society who, in these days of political excitement, can find a quiet half-hour for the early literature of their country, will be at once delighted and disappointed with a recent publication, edited by the well-known English philologist, Mr Skeat. I refer to the poetical works of King James I. In this edition we have, for the first time, the rare boon of a perfect text of the Kingis Quair, carefully copied from the unique MS. in the Bodleian library at Oxford; and we have, besides, a scholarly account of the relation of James's English to the English of Chaucer. Disappointment, however, will be felt at the exclusion of a poem which popular tradition has long associated with the name of James I.

—Christ's Kirk on the Green. This famous poem is treated by the editor in an altogether new and original manner. He denies it, on what one cannot help regarding as feeble evidence, to James I.; bestows it, but only for one capricious moment, upon James V.; and terminates his very arbitrary arbitration by flinging it in the air to any anonymous hand that may seize it! By this arrangement of Mr Skeat's, Christ's Kirk on the Green falls, it may be supposed, under that division of the Society's prospectus which is meant to include the unclaimed popular poetry of Scotland. That is a place where few would look to find it; and one cannot but think that a poem, which has been so long and so intimately connected with James I., and which, if it do not belong to him, belongs to no one else that can be named, would find its most appropriate place in association with his authentic work. It is, as I have said, a disappointment not to find it there; and the disappointment is the greater that such an elucidation of the text as Mr Skeat is so well qualified to give must now be delayed, and may not be forthcoming.

But there is dissatisfaction as well as disappointment. If any one will take the trouble to examine the reasons for which Mr Skeat refuses the poem to James I., he will find them far from convincing. They offer, indeed, but a

feeble opposition to the evidence of James's authorship, and make it no greatly difficult undertaking for a Scot, in the language of Pope, to 'fight for Christ's Kirk on the Green' in James's behalf.

The evidence in favour of James's authorship is both internal and external or historical. The external evidence, let it be said here in a sentence, is entirely in James's favour; and there is no internal evidence sufficiently strong to warrant any one in assigning it away from him.

The external evidence consists mainly of two independent statements made by writers who were alive considerably less than a century after the tragic death of James I. That singularly accomplished and singularly unfortunate prince, as is well known, perished in 1437. In the early part of the sixteenth century, the historian Mair referred to his poetical abilities, and after descriptively alluding to the Kingis Quair, mentioned him as the well-known author of many 'Cantilenæ,' which were then in popular request and circulation in the country. One is perfectly free to suppose that Christ's Kirk on the Green is included in this designation, and the supposition is strengthened by the well-established fact of James's love of adventure and predilection for disguise. His habit of roving *incognito* furnished him with many a

humorous theme, and no one will doubt his capability of poetical expression. But, further, there is the clear and express statement of George Bannatyne, that Christ's Kirk on the Green was the composition of James I. The poem, forming one of a collection by various authors, is itself written out, and assigned, as has been said, to King 'James *the First*;' and the date of the collection is 1568. It may well be asked here how Mr Skeat 'dings' the fact of this evidence, and upon what superior information he 'disputes' the statement. In the simplest manner imaginable, and with the strictest economy of language,—'James *the First*,' he says, is a clerical error for 'James *the Fift*' (Fifth)! His next step is to deny it to James V., and thus poor Bannatyne is convicted of a double fault, viz., a slip of the pen and an error of judgment.

But why should Mr Skeat propose the correction of 'James V.' for the clerical error of his own suggestion? Chiefly because it has been the fashion among English critics of Scottish literature to assign Christ's Kirk on the Green to James V. He has followed the example of Ritson, who followed Warton, who followed Percy, who followed Gibson, who dubiously followed the originator of the evil, the untrustworthy Dempster, who compiled his ecclesiastical history in the early part of the sixteenth

century, took occasion to refer to the poetical talent of James V., and in this connection credits him with the composition of Christ’s Kirk on the Green. More correctly, he credits him with the production of a poem descriptive of a rustic merry-making at Falkirk. Here there is the double confusion of one royal poet for another, and of one Scottish town for another, or rather for other two. Christ’s Kirk and Falkland collide in the recollection of the writer, who was either too indolent, or, as he wrote abroad, and at a distance from trustworthy sources of information, was unable to verify his ideas, and Falkirk was the result of the collision.

Mr Skeat’s objections to the assignment of the poem to James I. on the internal evidence are on old, and we should have thought exploded, lines — viz., the dissimilarity of the poem, in respect of language, style, and metre, to the Kingis Quair. The bulk of these objections is met by the difference of subject, and the difference of subject may fairly be accounted for by the greatly altered circumstances in which the king wrote. It is scarcely necessary to consider the remaining objections. The subject determines the style, and to a large extent the measure; and the scenes and characters portrayed spontaneously suggest the language. If James was only a respectable imitator of

Chaucer's English, he knew his own language well ; he had every means of knowing the Scottish character familiarly ; and there was all the difference between the amiable but somewhat sentimental prince, a prisoner in England, and the free and independent Sovereign, vigorously attentive to the duties of practical government, that exists between diffident youth and robust manhood. The objection on the score of metre begs the question. It is said that no specimen of the peculiar, rollicking, semi-lyrical stanza in which the poem is written exists previous to the middle of the sixteenth century. The statement presupposes that neither Christ's Kirk on the Green, nor the companion poem commencing *At Beltane*, was in existence before that time. It is apparent that some one must have invented the stanza ; and other considerations apart, it is at least as probable that the inventor was the clever King James as that he was some other person. No one will deny that the stanza is well adapted to the theme and motive of the poem.

To the objection that much of the language employed in Christ's Kirk on the Green is too modern for the early part of the fifteenth century, it is to be observed in answer, that it is not more modern than many passages in poems which are avowedly of that period. But this argument has been unwarrantably advanced.

The poem exhibits all the signs of a fifteenth century date. Even Mr Skeat is generous enough to allow that it may have been composed in the fifteenth century. Only, with a nicety of adjudication which seems to us like the possession of a sixth sense, he would place it half a century after James’s death. It would be easy to give a list of words or phrases from the poem which would simply defy the interpretation of any but the most accomplished philologist. We should have liked to know Mr Skeat’s ideas on the scene, and the occasion of the poem, and his interpretation of such expressions as ‘gluvis of the raffel richt,’ ‘shune of the straitis,’ ‘the kenzie cleiket to the cavell,’ etc. The poetry of the times of James V. exhibits no such difficulties of diction.





ALLAN RAMSAY.

TWO hundred years ago this October,¹ Allan Ramsay was born in the upland village of Leadhills, and one hundred years ago last July the first edition of Burns's poems made its appearance in the weaving town of Kilmarnock. For the greater part of the century prior to the latter event, Ramsay was universally regarded as the national poet of Scotland, and 'The Gentle Shepherd,' was believed to be the most consummate flower of Scottish poetical genius; and for just a century since, and in virtue of that latter event, the name and the fame of Ramsay have suffered more or less partial eclipse. He has not been forgotten,—his reputation was too firmly rooted in the popular heart for that; but he has been neglected,

¹ This was written in 1886.

undeservedly neglected ;—his poetical power has been growing more and more merely traditional, and is now, we fear, not perhaps universally, but largely taken on trust. His name, we have said, has not been forgotten—it is, indeed, a household word throughout the Scottish lowlands. There, and more especially in the rural parts of that district, they talk familiarly, in the Scottish manner, of Allan—‘that’s ane o’ Allan’s sangs,’ they will say. If they speak of Allan Cunningham, who was also in his way successful in touching the national heart, they never fail to give him his full name. Ramsay has a prescriptive right to the simple and unsupported *prenomén*. Sometimes they vary the expression by prefixing honest ;—‘honest Allan!’ they will say in the excess of a proud familiarity with his name. And ten to one they will follow up the words by a quotation, said to be from Burns, which probably reveals the origin of the adjective—

‘Yes ! there is ane—a Scottish callan ;
There’s ane—come forrit, honest Allan !
Thou needna jouk behint the hallan,
A chiel sae clever ;
The teeth o’ time may gnaw Tantallan,
But thou’s for ever !’

Yet it may well be doubted whether they

appreciate at its proper value the epithet which they repeat so glibly. In their application of it to the personal character of Ramsay, they err greatly in giving it the significance of a retiring modesty of demeanour, which silently permits itself to be taken advantage of by unscrupulous or less meritorious rivals. Ramsay was not unduly bold, but bashfulness was no feature of his disposition, and he was the last person of the men of his day to be found 'jouking behint the hallan.'¹ If Burns did not write the lines, and it is only Burns's brother Gilbert who denies the authorship, somebody else of Burns's day did, who saw and lamented that neglect of Ramsay to which we have alluded, and that eclipse of his fame as a pastoral poet, which began when the brighter orb of Burns's genius rose on the literary horizon. If Burns did write them, a supposition we decidedly incline to credit, they are in his mouth a singularly graceful acknowledgment of the excellence of his first and best model and master, and at the same time express or imply a sentiment which is quite in harmony with the frequent and just confessions of his indebtedness to Ramsay. Applicable in the brilliancy of Burns's day, the lines are still more applicable now. So far, in short, has neglect of the writings of Ramsay

¹ *i.e.* Ducking behind the door.

gone, that perhaps not one in twenty, at a moderate computation, even of those in the rural lowlands who profess a great regard for his name, could give an intelligibly consistent outline of the story of 'The Gentle Shepherd.' One may even venture to say that not a few of the admirers of 'The Gentle Shepherd,' would be found to be ignorant of the appropriateness of the title!

While the general reader will find much to amuse and a great deal to instruct him in the pages of Ramsay, no student of Scottish literary history can afford to neglect a writer so original. His name marks an epoch in the history of our poetical literature. Before him were 'the Makkaris,' who reached their lofty culmination in William Dunbar, and who may be said to have terminated in some obscurity in the Sempills. A new era, what one may very fairly call the era of modern Scottish poetry, began with Ramsay. It is *his* style, *his* method of approach to, and treatment of, a subject, *his* language, which, with modifications and developments of a perfectly natural and organic growth, Fergusson, and Burns, and Scott (in those of his novels which describe purely Scottish character), and all the many minor writers of distinctively Scottish literature, Hogg being the most notable exception, have since adopted and used. It would be no difficult task

to establish this statement of his connection with modern Scottish poetry—his connection with ancient Scottish poetry, too, can be demonstrated. Though he began a new era, he was not independent altogether of the old. He links on, at the outstart of his literary career, to the middle Sempill, whose humorous 'Elegy' on the death of the Piper of Kilbarchan was the standard of his imitation, as it had previously been that of his contemporary and correspondent, Hamilton of Gilbertfield. Not less sympathetic was his sense of humour with the comic vein of the poet-king, James the First, as exemplified in 'Christ's Kirk on the Green,' and his two cantos of continuation to that famous poem are an acknowledgment of the inspiration which he drew from the ancient 'Makkaris.' He was, however, essentially original. Cowper was not more original, excepting only in the matter of language. The poets of Scotland have from time to time employed a conventional and artificial phraseology, but no age and scarcely a writer in the long line of their history has been quite deficient in the use of a vigorous vernacular sufficient to bring them into living touch with the men of their generation. Ramsay's originality did not, therefore, chiefly show itself in his adoption of the current and conversational speech of his day. It is, however, to be noticed that by the voluminousness

of his poems, and their immense popularity, continued without a break for three generations, he may be said to have fixed the standard of modern Scotch, by blending his mother tongue with antique expressions of the past, and proving the capability of the mixture for large and varied poetical representations. 'Thy bonnie auld words gar (*make*) me smile,' was part of a complimentary epistle addressed to Ramsay by a contemporary, himself an adept in the use of Scotch, and considerably older than the person with whom he was corresponding. The fact would seem to be, that modern Scotch is very much what Ramsay made it, and we question if there are many expressions in the rural Scotch of to-day, with all Burns's cultivation of the language, which Ramsay, if he were living now, would not readily recognise.

Neither is Ramsay's originality to be mainly found in the humour of his delineations. The humour, though in one sense it was his own, that is, unaffectedly sincere and genuine as a personal possession, was, notwithstanding, what one might almost call a national property, in which such of 'the Makkaris' as Dunbar and Lyndsay, and such of the later poets as Fergusson and Burns, could claim, in common with him, at least an equal share. Yet it may well be allowed that he deepened and widened

the national sense of humour by the use which he made of his own share, and turned it with greater emphasis and effect upon the follies and minor immoralities of social life than any had ever done before him. He set the example of humorous portraiture and address to Burns ; and even in that dangerous though legitimate field for satirical humour, which, since Lyndsay's time, has been the exclusive walk of Burns, namely, religious bigotry, tyranny and sham, he was meditating entrance and onslaught at the age of seventy—too late an age ! Hear his own words :—

‘ I have it even in my poo’er
The very kirk itself to scour,
An’ that ye’ll say’s a brag richt bauld !
But did not Lyndsay this of auld ?
Wha gave the scarlet harlot strokes
Sneller (*keener*) than all the pelts of Knox.’

Ramsay's originality lies much in the unromantic and yet fascinating realism of his natural descriptions. He flings no meretricious glamour, brings no lime-light effects to bear upon his scenery. Neither does he present us with featurelessly faithful photographic copies. It is nature, her naked self, but never presented except when in perfect harmony with the lyrical mood to which she is accessory, or the dramatic situation to which she is subordinated. It is very much the nature to which Cowper intro-

duces us, allowance being made for difference of locality—healthy, every-day, commonplace nature ; only, I think, more vividly, completely, and harmoniously presented. A brief quotation or two will, in a general way, exemplify what is meant. ‘This sunny morning,’ says the Gentle Shepherd,—

‘This sunny morning, Roger, cheers my blood,
And puts all nature in a jovial mood.
How heartsome is’t to see the rising plants,
And hear the birds chirm owre their pleasing rants !’

The description of Habbie’s How (*Hollow*) is illustrative instance :—

‘Gae farer up the burn to Habbie’s How,
Where a’ the sweets of spring and simmer grow.
Between twa birks, out o’er a little linn,
The water fa’s and maks a singand din ;
A pool breast-deep, beneath, as clear as glass,
Kisses with easy whirls the bordering grass ;
We’ll end our washing while the morning’s cool,
And, when the day grows het, we’ll to the pool,
There wash oursels—’tis healthfu’ now in May,
And sweetly cauler on sae warm a day.’

Burns’s realism is of the same sort, with this difference, that there is in his descriptions an accompanying wealth of verbal melody which Ramsay could not command. Even in his most impassioned passages, Burns is still the realistic poet.

It is, however, in his delineation of human

nature that Ramsay shows greatest originality. Reference is here made, less to his earlier, and broadly, indeed somewhat exaggeratedly, humorous descriptions of low life, than to his later and cheerfully serious representations of commonplace rural character. The pastoral drama of 'The Gentle Shepherd' is not only a masterpiece, but an original creation. There was nothing like it, nothing to suggest it, in all the antecedent literature of Scotland. It is to this day the most widely and successfully representative poem dealing with Scottish rural life. Fergusson's 'Farmer's Ingle,' and Burns's 'Cottar's Saturday Night' are kindred poems, similar in subject, and approached with the same serious spirit. But the form is different: they are narrative poems, descriptive of a common phase of rustic life within doors. None the less are they pendants to 'The Gentle Shepherd.' For 'The Gentle Shepherd' is less a drama in which the actors happen to be rustics, with the interest of the play dependent on the plot, than an idyll, the form of which happens to be dramatic, with the interest dependent on the author's views of rustic human life. It is to the credit of Ramsay as a genius of a distinctly original type, that living in close and actual contact with the artificial school of poets, of whom Pope and Gay were the representatives of his acquaintance, and rather wel-

coming than seeking to withdraw himself from their influence, he had yet within himself an instinct of true poetic feeling and a power of true poetic art, sufficient to lift him above their blandishments, and to anticipate by half a century that return to nature which in England was inaugurated by Cowper, and finally consummated by Wordsworth.

Scarcely less original was Ramsay as a lyrical poet. Next to his 'Gentle Shepherd,' his songs have made a deep impression on the popular mind. He composed rather more than a hundred in all, and while it must be allowed, in the light of the later lyrical productions of Scotland, that the great majority of them are deficient alike in harmony and melody, it should be remembered that the criticism would be very unfair that judged them on their absolute merits. The men of his generation were in a better position to do him justice here, knowing as they did the poverty of his models—for ballads are not songs, and Ramsay wrote no ballads—and unconscious as they were of the future of Scottish song under the marvellous art of Burns; and it was in his songs that they recognised a great part of his power. In short, he was the first in point of time of our song-writers, and may be said to have invented that species of song which is universally regarded as distinctively Scottish.

Burns's songs exhibit a far higher degree of lyrical inspiration and utterance, but they are of identically the same species as Ramsay's. To the green, or only partially opened, buds of Ramsay they offer the contrast of the full-blown blossoms of June, gorgeous with dyes, and breathing a paradise of fragrance; but they are yet the development of those buds, grown on the same stem, and drawing nourishment from the same soil. Much was to be expected from a country which had already given the rich promise of 'Polwarth on the Green,' 'Lochaber no more,' 'The Last Time I came o'er the Muir,' and a really charming and even passionately voluptuous love song, beginning somewhat coldly with the question, 'Now wad ye wha I met yestreen?' They were prelude predictive of 'Bonnie Jean,' 'The Gloomy Night is gath'ring fast,' and even of 'Highland Mary'

There are some authors, and even authors of note, of whose private life it may be said without any necessary implication of a stain upon their character, that the less one knows of it the better. They seem to have lived two individual and separate lives, the one social (which it may have been unsocial), and the other literary, between which there was no vital bond or union. You will search the one in vain for key or commentary to the other. The statements

cannot be made of Ramsay. His domestic life was in every-day contact with his literary life, supplying it with theme, feeling, illustration and language. His literary life, in short, was, as far as it went, the expression of his domestic life: it was even more autobiographical than that of Burns. His, therefore, is a case where some acquaintance with the man is of service to a due appreciation of the poet.

It was fortunate for the development of the poetical faculty within him that his early years, from birth to the termination of boyhood, were spent without a break in the isolation and comparative solitude of upland rural life. Here he was, in the absence of other and less healthy attractions, in a sense *compelled* to make familiar acquaintance with the realism of Nature and the ways of the pastoral world.

Placed in the midst of a monotonous landscape of unromantic hills, he found Nature hard-favoured and ungenial, and therefore, undazzled by beauty where beauty was not, he only looked at her the more closely and critically, and practised the philosophy of an economical contentment. We have, in one of his somewhat rare reminiscences of his early life, a vivid glimpse of the common experience of his boyhood. 'Aft,' he says, speaking not merely of holiday rambles,

‘ Aft have I wid thro’ glens wi’ chorking feet,
When neither kilt nor plaid could fend the weet ;
Yet blithely wad I bang oot ower the brae
And stend ower burns, as light as ony rae,
Hoping the morn might prove a better day.’

This passage is of further interest as revealing that adaptive temperament in the boy, which was at once the distinguishing trait and the most valuable possession of the man. To the habit of mind which the last line implies, he must partly have been brought by observation and study of the simple, uncomplaining lives of the practical hill - people, his neighbours. With their manners and customs he was familiarly and sympathetically acquainted. Bred, as he himself tells us, fifteen summers amongst them, he was more likely to have his impression of their ways deepened by the contrast than effaced by the novelties of city life, and, true as are his transcripts of rural scenery, his delineations of rustic character are even more faithful to the copy. There can, we think, be little doubt that his recollection of the Lowthers, tinged, it must be admitted, with the later-known grace of the Pentlands, furnished those admirably clear and correct pictures of pastoral scenery which form the background of ‘The Gentle Shepherd’; and there can be still less that the farmers and shepherds and milkmaids of Upper Clydesdale were the prototypes of

Glaud and Symon, Patie and Roger, and Peggy and Jenny.

His fifteen years' residence in Leadhills was also of course the period of his school education. His reading was sufficiently liberal to include the Latin grammar, and to enable the young student to make out the meaning of Horace, and even catch an occasional glimpse of the beauty of his style. In middle age he revived those early studies, and gave as the result some half-dozen versions of Horace in Lowland Scotch, which retain the sentiment and reproduce much of the pithy expression of the original. But a specimen of his translation will be the best index of his scholarship—

' Then fling on coals, and ripe the ribs,¹
And beek² the house baith but and ben,
That mutchkin stoup³ it hauds but dribs,
Then let's get in the tappit hen.'⁴

This is really an admirable rendering, as a glance at the text will show :—

Dissolve frigus, ligna super foco,
Large reponens, atque benignius
Deprome quadrimum Sabina,
O Thaliarche, merum diota.

The amplification of *benignius* in Ramsay's translation was the result of a genuine inspiration. No less happily turned are the lines,—

¹ Stir the fire. ² Warm. ³ A small measure. ⁴ Large measure.

~~ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED EXCEPT WHERE SHOWN
OTHERWISE~~

Kamsay was kept in school till he was fifteen, and afterwards, that we must call for a boy in the country, as travelling education. But this advantage he was indebted to his schoolmaster, a Mr. Christian, who ~~was~~ to have given a new piece of ground upon which he had now transferred a large family, in the neighbourhood of London. Kamsay's mother had been early for a widow, and, as the consequence of this, he in the country was brought up by his father's family, so the conclusion of it was probably determined by the death of his mother. At the age of fifteen came time in the first year of last century. Allan Kamsay, an orphan, friendless and penniless, and dependent upon his own exertions for his livelihood, looked out upon the world in which he was yet to be both famous and wealthy from the window of a wig-maker's shop in V. - - - - -

Edinburgh, though then so much smaller, had more the air of a capital than now. 'Legislation's sovereign powers' still sat beneath the Castle, and there was in the single mile-long street of the city more bustle relatively to area than appears in the Edinburgh of to-day. The city was too small for the life that was pent within its walls. As the inhabitants increased, accommodation was ventured upon for the surplus in such aerial altitudes as ninth and even tenth storeys, or improvised in sunken flats and subterranean cellars. When the teeming population took the street, it literally filled it with a noisy, motley crowd, moving and mixing in endless picturesque combinations, and comprising in close juxtaposition individuals of every rank, reputation, and calling in the kingdom. It was the world political *in parvo*. Here young Ramsay must shortly have been in his element. His disposition, his genius, his actions, all alike testify to his love of sociality and predilection for a town life. Men and their manners were to him a more congenial study than the aspects of nature. He was never afterwards, in the long life that lay before him, to dissociate himself from Edinburgh. It is true that occasionally in his later life he would sigh for the sight of a clear stream or a breath of country air, but the recollection of the Glengonar and the Duneetny, and other

burns of upper Clydesdale, were sufficient to satisfy the longing, or a flying visit to the Pentlands at Penicuik would send him back refreshed with a new relish for the town. His knowledge of the world physical as acquired during the first fifteen years of his life was enough for his purpose as a poet—it afforded him the scenic setting of his character delineations. Ramsay had that healthy love of nature which is pretty generally diffused. It was genuine as far as it went, but it was far from being a passion. It was duly subordinated to human associations. None the less are his incidental descriptions of nature accurate and picturesque. His power of observation was keen, and caught as if by special instinct the characteristic lines alike of a landscape and a human life. It was, however, as a humourist—a depicter of the comic in human nature—that Ramsay preferred to appear. There is a tradition that he wished to be a painter. If he had been a painter, there is little doubt that the bent of his genius would have pointed him to figure subjects, and we might have had in him a Scottish Hogarth, or an earlier Wilkie, though it must also be said that the temptation to the gainful trade of portrait painting might have exerted as great a force upon him as it afterwards exerted upon his son.

We may imagine Ramsay becoming natural-

ised to city life during the five or seven years of his apprenticeship. The close of this period would bring him to manhood, give him comparative freedom of action, and awaken within him a hopeful sense of the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship. He had now more leisure, and he seems to have employed it in making probationary acquaintance with the various social circles that were then open to a young man in his station of life. The favourite summer recreation of the burgesses was, then as now, the game of golf. It was played on Bruntsfield Links, which were then less than a mile from the nearest city port; and here the young wigmaker learned to tee and drive the ball over the bent, and fall into golfers' ways. One of those ways was an occasional resort to the little village of Morningside, scarcely a mile further into the country, and there the evening's diversion on the green was crowned by sundry horns of a mysterious white ale of potent spirit, the recipe of which was the patent and sole property of Maggie Johnston, the keeper of the farm-hostel to which resort was made. Here Allan studied and practised *Hy-jinks*, and once at least fell a victim to the game of 'haill-oot (*i.e.*, *whole-out*) drinks.' On this memorable occasion he found the distance back to Edinburgh too fatiguing.

‘ And when the dawn beyoud (*began*) to glow
I hirsled (*jerked*) up my dizzy pow (*head*)
Frae ’mang the corn, like wirrycow (*bugbear*),
Wi’ banes right sair,
And kent nae mair than if a yowe (*ewe*)
How I cam’ there.’

But as a rule he would return to town in social talk with some brother golfer before the ten o’clock drum was beat, and the city gates closed for the night. Winter put a stop to open-air pastime, but drew the ties of a narrow sociality closer within doors. There was a strong feeling in some quarters of Edinburgh at this time—the time of the Union—that social life was too much under the restraint of the Church. Municipal authority accepted the restraint, recognising in it a legitimate and salutary influence. The magistracy neither provided nor permitted any sort of public amusement within the city bounds. There was neither theatre nor concert room. Even dinner parties were comparatively unknown. The fashionable form of conviviality was the cheap and mild dissipation of afternoon tea-drinking. Life was drearier of a Sunday—we should in all honesty of phrase say rather on the Sabbath, for the day was observed with all the rigour of the Mosaic institution, save only for the absence of animal sacrifices. Pious prowlers watched the street during divine service, and *the seizers* pounced upon every

straggler, and confiscated every non-scriptural comfort that came in their way. We have startling records of the rigidity of their righteousness. A doctor's messenger, despatched to an inn for some claret, is trapped on his return, and relieved of the bottles on the warrant of the Fourth Commandment. A hot roast is nosed out from the street, and carried off as a creature comfort of doubtful reputation even on profane days. A black-bird in a cage at a window is silenced for ever for desecrating the Lord's day by whistling. It was not in the nature of things that such a ceremonial morality should continue for ever. A desire for freedom from such restraint was a rational instinct, and its expression was only a question of time. It was already begun in the first decade of the century. Convivial night-clubs were creeping into clandestine vogue. A society for the practice of public dancing had been formed, and was being surreptitiously patronised. Collections of the godless comic ballads, love ditties, and satirical poems of pre-Reformation times had been published and were being secretly circulated. These and such social phenomena afforded proof of a reaction against Puritanical rule. They were the perfectly natural growth of a people whose social instincts had been indiscriminately repressed as all alike sinful. Ramsay threw himself into

the reactionary movement with characteristic promptitude. All his sympathies were with it from the first. It recommended itself alike to his joyous nature and his common-sense. Accordingly he sought and found entrance into the Easy Club. He frequented the Assembly's dances,—and may have been present when the door of the dancing-room was assailed by a mob of fanatics armed with red-hot spits and pokers. He possessed himself of a copy of James Watson's collection of ancient and modern Scottish poems, and read with a relish that resembled the acquisition of a new and delightful sense the humours of 'Christ's Kirk on the Green,' 'The Piper of Kilbarchan,' and 'Bonnie Heck.' While thus revolting from the austerity of an exclusive and gloomy Calvinism, he gave no countenance to the profligacy and profanity of the extreme party in the reactionary movement. He did not become vicious because he refused to practise asceticism. He did not approve of the prospectus of the Hell-fire Club or the programme of the Horn Order, because he disapproved of the intolerance of religious fanaticism and tyranny. He believed there was room between the extremes ample enough to walk in with all reasonable freedom, and in this middle course he ate his cakes and drank his ale, and both preached and practised an enlightened virtue.

We have from Ramsay's own pen a full-length portrait of himself, as he appeared in early manhood, which may conveniently be introduced here. He is a few inches under the middle size, being only five feet and four inches high, of slender make, as he was in boyhood, but lithe and active, and neither lean nor unhealthy. He is 'black-a-vised,' that is, of a swarthy complexion; but the rounded contour of his cheeks, and an expression of mingled intelligence and good humour in eyes and lips, produce something far removed from a saturnine cast of countenance. His motto is moderation in all things—the use of pleasure, and neither its *abuse* nor yet its *disuse*. What he said of another may be said of him—

'A youth thus blest with healthy frame,
Enlivened with a lively flame,
Will ne'er with sordid pinch control
The satisfaction of his soul.'

What he said of himself we may also reproduce:—

'I hate a drunkard or a glutton,
Yet I'm no foe to wine and mutton.'

Then, with respect to 'the fabric of his mind':—

'Tis mair to mirth than grief inclin'd.
I rather choose to laugh at folly
Than show dislike by melancholy,
Well judging a sour, heavy face
Is not the truest sign of grace.'

In politics he professes to be no partisan, and in religion he is no sectarian : —

‘ Know positively I’m a Christian,
Believing truths and thinking free,
Wishing thrawn parties wad agree.’

He makes candid confession of a desire for ‘fair fame,’ and is familiarly explicit on the subject of his domestic affairs. ‘Born,’ he says, ‘to nae lairdship,’

‘ I mak what honest shift I can,
And in my ain house am gudeman—
Which stands in Embro’ Street, the sunside.’

Ramsay was well-connected, at least on his father’s side. He claimed kindred with the chief of the Ramsays, Ramsay of Dalhousie, and ‘had his claims allowed’ by the Earl. There is little doubt that there were influential members of his grandfather’s family in Edinburgh, when he first exchanged country life for a life in town; but as he remained throughout the whole course of his life independent of any of them, it is unnecessary to trace his connection with people to whom he owed so little. But it is necessary to correct one or two popular errors concerning the business to which he was bound apprentice. And in the first place, Ramsay was not a barber. It is very probable that in the early part of the

eighteenth century the tonsorial art was a branch of surgery ; but this at least is certain, that it had no connection as a craft with the calling of a wigmaker. Nor was Ramsay's life-long occupation as a burghess of Edinburgh that to which he had served an apprenticeship. It is true that he was a wigmaker when he began to be famous, but from the time of his established reputation as a new Scottish poet, that is some time between 1720 and 1726, he gradually took up the trade of a bookseller, and wigmaking went to the wall. He was a bookseller, and a most enterprising one, for considerably over a quarter of a century ; it was as a bookseller and book-lender he made a fortune ; and it is with the trade of a dealer in books we should properly associate his name. Though he thus left wigmaking, he was too sensible a man to despise it, or any other lawful occupation. He speaks jocularly of being a 'thatcher of skulls,' and—referring to his double business of wigmaking and bookselling, which he carried on for a few years simultaneously—he describes himself as thatching the outside and lining the inside of 'many a douce and witty pash' (*head*).

In one of his rhyming epistles, indeed, he declares he was 'bred but howe (*humbly*) enough to a mean trade.' But he was in easy circumstances when he thus wrote retrospectively,

and his correspondent was no less exalted a personage than the Secretary of the Admiralty, whose views of wigmaking were no doubt as Ramsay sympathetically described them. His reasons for abandoning the occupation to which he was bred for the calling of a bookseller were perfectly satisfactory : he found the latter to be more congenial to his tastes, and more lucrative at the same time that it was less laborious. Wigweaving, however, procured him the double advantage of a wife and patronage. His first patrons were naturally his customers, necessarily men of professional or at least genteel rank ; and his wife, Christian, was the daughter of one of them, a legal practitioner in the town, of the name of Ross.

His marriage with this lady, who was considerably his superior in social rank, was the beginning of a long and happy union. It was celebrated during the New Year festivities of 1712. From that year good fortune with scarcely one interval of absence waited on his footsteps. It was about that time he first began to write verses in emulation of Hamilton, and it was in that same year he was admitted into a very select social coterie of twelve, self-styled the Easy Club, and numbering among its members a University professor, a doctor in large practice, and the well-known scholar and printer, Thomas Ruddiman.

His connection with this club, while it was highly creditable to him, was of the utmost importance in drawing out and directing his poetical talent. He became its laureate, entertained its gatherings with his compositions, profited by its criticisms, and acquired something of its professional culture. It was for the Easy Club he wrote his humorous descriptions of low life, such as the 'Elegy on the Death of Maggie Johnston,' a suburban alewife well-known to all Edinburgh. This was really his first poem, his earlier pieces being merely the essays of an apprentice learning the art of literary expression. It was much applauded, and encouraged him to renewed efforts which were still more successful. The companion, 'Elegy on the Death of Lucky Wood,' the cleanly alewife of the Canongate, and his additions to the ancient poem of 'Christ's Kirk on the Green,' mark his highest achievements as a humourist in the department of low life. His situations in these compositions are intensely comical, and the language that depicts them is correspondingly blunt and broad. They cannot be defended from the charge of coarseness, but it can be said that the animalism they reveal is neither morbid nor prurient, any more than that of Chaucer; such as it is, it is natural and healthy. Hogarth found in Ramsay a brother artist, and in token of his delight at the dis-

covery dedicated to him the twelve plates of his *Illustrations of Hudibras*. Ramsay's delineations of low life were much misunderstood in his own day by well-meaning people of narrow sympathies and timid morality; but if their misunderstanding had the effect of sending him to the higher and purer regions of respectable comedy, a supposition which is doubtful, we should be the last person to find fault with it. There is, at least, no doubt that after his thirty-sixth year, most of the coarseness which so abundantly characterises his earlier art as a humourist, disappears from his delineations, and the result is a style of composition not less effective and more refined, and more distinctly on the side of virtue.

Ramsay, however, it should be noticed, claimed in his earlier compositions, and at the time of their production, the credit of a moralist, and attributed to the spiritual purblindness of his critics their failure to perceive the satire of his representations. Here are his own words on the subject, appended to one of the freest of all his compositions—the third canto of 'Christ's Kirk on the Green.'

'I have pursued,' he says, 'these comical characters, having gentlemen's health and pleasure, and the good manners of the vulgar in view,—the main design of comedy being to represent the follies and mistakes of low life in a just

light, making them appear as ridiculous as they really are, that each who is a spectator may avoid being the object of laughter.'

If the object aimed at were certain of attainment, the justification of the artist would be tolerably complete.

The members of the Easy Club were suspected of sympathy with Jacobitism, and the suspicion becoming warm, the Club broke up in some alarm. Ramsay steered pretty clear of politics, but there is good ground for believing that his political leanings were towards the exiled Stuarts. The famous Countess of Eglinton, who accepted the dedication of 'The Gentle Shepherd,' was no politically indiscriminate patroness of literature; and there can be no doubt that community of political sentiment would be a recommendation, if not a requisite, to the friendship of Pope, Gay and Arbuthnot—a friendship which Ramsay enjoyed. On the dissolution of the Club, which occurred shortly after the fiasco of 'The Fifteen,' Ramsay resolved on an appeal to the public for confirmation of the claim which he now set up, to rank as a poet. He set about the matter with characteristic prudence. Specimens of his poetry were printed on broadsheets and circulated about the town by street-vendors for the purpose of testing or stimulating the popular

taste. The plan succeeded so well that it became a practice of the citizens' wives to send out for 'Allan Ramsay's last piece,' and discuss it with their afternoon tea. He next opened a subscription-list for purchasers' names, and finally a handsome quarto of four hundred pages made its appearance from the press of his friend Ruddiman, and was speedily taken up. An analysis of the subscription-list shows, to the credit of the Scottish nobility, that about one-seventh of his patrons were of aristocratic birth. It is pleasant to find Pope's name in the list. The result of the publication was to extend his fame, and to improve his fortunes by about four hundred guineas. At the same time, it determined him to a literary career, and from the moment of that determination wigweaving languished, and the more leisurely occupation of bookselling filled his vacant hours. A period of great industry followed. Scarcely a year passed for the next decade but he was before the public with one or more offerings of original or editorial work. His editorial work was the collection of selected songs, both Scottish and English, into the 'Tea Table Miscellany,' and a series of Scottish poems, purporting to have been 'wrote by the ingenious before 1600,' brought together into 'The Evergreen.' These col-

lections contained compositions of his own which were either too free morally or too dangerous politically to be owned amongst his authorised productions. Of these anonymous poems the best is, undoubtedly, 'The Vision,' which may indeed be regarded as Ramsay's most ambitious effort, and certainly reveals a sweep and power of imagination beyond what we usually associate with his name. In original work he ventured unfortunately into fields foreign alike to his genius and his art—he took to imitating Pope, and produced some very laborious essays in English verse, and a few sad but unsorrowful elegies. His true sphere and talent lay in the use of the Scottish language upon themes of national interest. Of this he was well aware, but he could not altogether resist the temptation to enter the lists with his English contemporaries, and encounter them with their own weapons. His English verses, of which he wrote far too many, may show his culture, but they give no indication of his genius.

The quarto of which we have spoken appeared in 1721. Seven years later, that is, in 1728, he collected the pieces he had written in the interval, and published them in a similar manner in a companion quarto, and then rested from poetical labours. The period of his literary activity altogether extended over twenty

years, of which the first five were the years of his apprenticeship. He gave over when he ceased to write with facility,—when, as he said, he found his muse beginning to be ‘dour and dorty.’¹ Ramsay probably made a mistake in imagining that facility of composition was a genuine proof of inspiration, and we cannot help thinking that the reduction of his speed of composition by one-half, if it had meant the retention of his heroic couplets and other English poems, which constitute about one-half of his works, would have been a very desirable thing indeed. He had, however, used the pen too long and too assiduously to be able entirely to forego the luxury of its use, and an occasional epistle in verse towards the end of his life showed that if he composed with more effort he composed with more pith.

The second quarto established Ramsay’s fame. It contained the composition which gave him most satisfaction, and which best illustrates the true character of his genius, the charming pastoral drama of ‘The Gentle Shepherd.’ Not the least charming feature of the little world which it reveals to us is the natural cheerfulness which pervades almost every scene. It became instantly popular, and so excited the envy of enemies, who had hitherto identified him with the school of art which delights

* Loth and sulky.

to minister to immorality, that they absurdly refused him the authorship. The germ of the play will be found in two detached pastoral poems in the first quarto, where they seem to have attracted little attention. Ramsay ran them together as the first and second scenes of a drama which beautifully and naturally evolves the story they half suggest. No more pleasing and effective moral agency than this dramatic pastoral, the Bible alone excepted, ever entered the cottages of the Scottish peasantry. Its morality is of the best type—it is the morality of common-sense, practicable, honest and cheerful.

From his forty-fifth year onwards till his death, at the mature age of seventy-two, in 1758, Ramsay occupied himself chiefly with the enjoyment of his literary fame and the society or welfare of his children, and with the extension of his business as a burgess of Edinburgh. His bookseller's shop in High Street looked out upon the busiest, as it was the most fashionable, and central part of Edinburgh. It became a kind of lounge for the literary and professional men of the town. Here Gay used to waste the summer forenoons in congenial gossip with Ramsay, and find amusement in the motley crowds that thronged around the old Market Cross under the windows. It was here, too, that Ramsay instituted the circulating library, which, while it brought

him in a substantial addition to his annual gains, introduced into Edinburgh the newest books published in London, and created and fostered a taste for reading, especially among the young, that was afterwards to bear good fruit in Scotland. There can be no doubt that the literary rivalry which sprang up between London and Edinburgh during the latter half of last century, a rivalry which Johnson lived to see, and which Horace Walpole recognised, was in no small degree owing to the enterprise of Ramsay, and the introduction of the circulating library. A feature of his library was the number of books of dramatic literature which it contained, and which were largely in demand by the younger part of the population. The cry was raised that Ramsay was polluting the morals of the city youth. He was unmoved by the cry, and continued to persevere in his plans for the enlightenment of the public. At this time there was not a single place of public amusement in Edinburgh—except the Assembly, as it was called, which met for the recreation of dancing in the dreary fashion so picturesquely described for us by Oliver Goldsmith. There was no theatre. Ramsay resolved to erect a theatre at his own expense, and regulate the management of it so as to make its entertainments at once popular and elevating. At great cost the

building was put up and preparations were made for the opening day. The prices were already advertised. Nothing remained but that the house should be licensed. At the last moment, by a majority of the civic rulers, licence was refused; the magistracy, who had the licensing power, had been influenced by the clergy of the city; they were not likely soon to change their views upon dramatic representations; and Ramsay was almost ruined. The ruin that threatened him awoke manifestations of wild delight among those who are known in Scotland as 'the unco guid or rigidly righteous,' and those others who had long been jealous of the success that had attended all the past enterprise of Ramsay. They preached at him, they lampooned him, they held him up as a fearful example of divine judgment. They published the 'Dying Words of Allan Ramsay'; they set up 'A Looking-Glass for Allan Ramsay.' Ramsay tried to find redress by an appeal to law. The lawyers told him, in irrevocable decision of his case, that he had been *damaged* but not *injured*, and with the nice legal distinction he was obliged to be satisfied. Not, however, till he had tried one other resource. The Lord President of the Supreme Court, the famous and enlightened judge, Forbes of Culloden, was his private friend; he would petition

the Lord President. The petition, which is in verse, was, as the tone of it shows, provident against disappointment, the seriousness of the case being half hidden under an air of jocularly. It is so characteristic of Ramsay, that the concluding portion may here be presented. 'Either' (he says, referring to the decision of the Court),—

' Either say that I'm a 'faulter,
Or thole (*allow*) me to employ my bigging (*building*),
Or, of the burden, ease my rigging (*back*)
By ordering fra the public fund
A sum to pay for what I'm bund ;
Syne (*then*), in amends for what I've lost,
Edge me into some canny post,
With the good liking of our King,
And your petitioner shall—sing.'

Ramsay finally applied himself to his legitimate business, and in an incredibly short time retrieved his loss by the theatre, and amassed besides what seems to have been a very comfortable independency. Some considerable time before he fairly retired from business he had put up a queer octagonal villa on the Castle-hill, commanding an extensive view northwards of every variety of Scottish scenery, and here he comfortably closed a long, happy, and useful career. In his seventieth year he had written to the Laird of Pennycuik, one of his intimate friends,—

‘I plan to be
From shackling trade and danger free,
That I may, loose from care and strife,
With calmness view the edge of life,
And, when a full ripe age shall crave,
Slide easily into my grave.’

His last days were as he had wished—they found him as free from care and strife as it has ever fallen to the lot of men in circumstances similar to his to be. His children, a son and two daughters, were everything that he could desire. The son, whom at much expense he had bred as an artist, was rising into fame, and, possessed as he was of much of his father's talent and disposition, was already showing those artistic and social qualities which were presently to secure for him the honour of portrait painter and prime favourite at the court of George III. He was equally free from strife. He had enemies, but they were none of his making. They were either the fault of the age or the envious growth of his good fortune. He was both generous enough and wise enough to leave them alone. Satirist, of course, he was, but his satire was of that genial and even gentle kind that aims at institutions rather than individuals, at manners rather than men, and is content with simple exposure. In this respect, as has already been hinted, Ramsay presents a strong

resemblance to Chaucer. It would be easy to pursue the parallel further, and to find in the history and external circumstances of Ramsay, and even in his personal appearance, lines and lineaments which recall the genial father of English humour. The same prudence in the conduct of worldly affairs, the menace of the same misfortune when life was well advanced, the same rotundity of figure, and the same perennial sympathy with the experience and gaiety of youth were visible in the case of both. If Pinkerton has been the most virulent in his abuse of Ramsay, he has also been the least capable of framing an estimate of him from a well-nigh total want of sympathy with his subject. We prefer to accept our opinion of Ramsay from his life, which lies patent to those who have eyes, and from his published writings, which afford the best commentary on his life; or, if we must find a critic of authority with whom our own opinion shall agree, we shall hardly find a more competent than Walter Scott, who brought the essential quality of the man into a single word, when he called him 'the joyous Ramsay.'



ROBERT FERGUSON.

SUBJECTION to the demon of despondency was a rare experience to the usually calm and philosophical Wordsworth. Yet even his serene soul was occasionally clouded with dismal recollection of the past and gloomy doubt of the future. In one of these despondent moods, he gave utterance to a singularly forlorn sentiment. He had been contemplating the mystery of suffering genius as exemplified in the history of Chatterton and of Burns ; and, dwelling exclusively on the wreckage of poetical lives, he came to the dreary conclusion,—

‘We poets in our youth begin in gladness,
But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness.’

The statement, of course, is far from being of universal application. The mightiest poets, being essentially and exceptionally sane, and having spirits above the tyranny of time, have not died in misery. Poverty and neglect, as the terms are currently understood—some of

them knew, but the end was neither despondency nor madness. In no sense of the word did Shakespeare die in misery. He was surrounded with every evidence of material comfort, and attended by all the blessings which, in his own estimate of a prosperous life, should accompany advancing years—‘honour, love, obedience, troops of friends.’ Milton, our next mightiest poet, did once make direct complaint, in the latter part of his life, of having fallen ‘on evil tongues and evil days,’ but it was by no means a complaint of personal despondency: it was rather a stern denunciation of the frivolity and sensuality of a government, against which he was in solitary rebellion of spirit. And if his physical vision was darkened, his mind saw with clearer and steadier light: ‘none the more,’ he declared, with the bravery of unshaken faith in a great controlling Power that ordered all things,—

‘None the more
Cease I to wander where the muses haunt
Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill,
Smit with the love of sacred song ; but chief
Thee, Sion, and the flowery brooks below
That wash thy hallowed feet, and warbling flow,
Nightly I visit.’

Yet, notwithstanding these, and other less, but still well-known names, to the contrary, Wordsworth’s melancholy lines contain suffi-

cient truth to warrant their general acceptance. It would be easy to extract name after name from the long roll of British poets to whose case they are completely applicable. Wordsworth himself, in the poem in which the lines occur, cites but two; chosen, doubtless, as being the saddest near to his own times; but they are representative names of the class to which Collins and Cowper in England, and Ferguson and Tannahill in Scotland, belong.

The relation of society to suffering genius is a question more easily raised than answered. Many people will hesitate—some perhaps refuse—to acknowledge the relation as one of exceptional responsibility. Suffering genius itself, and those who have duly appreciative sympathy with it, have no such hesitation. To them the duty of society towards genius in distress is clear; its obligation a moral certainty. Burns claimed for himself the protection of his generation. *Where*, he asked, with a proud dependence, to which he felt he was entitled,—*Where should I so properly look for patronage as to the illustrious of my native land?* Afterwards, when he had made experience of neglect, and was feeling the pang of disappointment, with haughty independence he hurled at the Crown itself the open reproach,—

‘For neither pension, post, nor place,
Am I your humble debtor.’

Coleridge was scarcely less emphatic in his impeachment of the country, for criminal neglect of Chatterton, Spencer, and Otway. 'Is this,' he demanded,—

'Is this the land of song-ennobled line?
Is this the land where genius ne'er in vain
Poured forth his lofty strain?
Ah, me! yet Spenser, gentlest bard divine,
Beneath chill disappointment's shade,
His weary limbs in lonely anguish laid;
And o'er her darling dead,
Pity, hopeless, hung her head,
While 'mid the pelting of that pitiless storm
Sunk to the cold earth Otway's famished form.'

But his keenest invective was reserved for the treatment of Burns by 'the Illustrious of his native land.' 'They snatched him,' says Coleridge, 'from the sickle and the plough, to gauge ale-firkins;' and in return for this generosity he would propose the following elaborate symbolical mockery of thanks:—

'Then in the outskirts, where pollutions grow,
Pick the rank henbane and the dusky flowers
Of night-shade, or its red and tempting fruit.
These, with stopt nostril, and glove-guarded hand,
Knit in nice intertexture—so to twine
The illustrious brow of Scotch nobility!'

Carlyle has handled the subject, relatively to the case of Burns, with his accustomed suggestiveness, but with unusual inconclusiveness. 'We are little disposed,' he says, 'to join with

that class of Burns's admirers who accuse the higher ranks among us of having ruined Burns by their selfish neglect of him. We doubt whether direct pecuniary help, had it been offered, would have been accepted, or could have proved very effectual.' But he also says, 'We shall grant, and for Burns it is granting much, that, with all his pride, he would have thanked, even with exaggerated gratitude, any one who had cordially befriended him. . . . The poor promotion he desired in his calling might have been granted: it was his own scheme, therefore likelier than any other to be of service. All this it might have been a luxury, nay, it was a duty, for our nobility to have done. No part of this, however, did any of them do, or apparently attempt or wish to do. . . . Let us pity and forgive them! . . . Here was an action, extending, in virtue of its worldly influence, we may say, through all time; in virtue of its moral nature, beyond all time, being immortal as the Spirit of Goodness itself; this action was offered them to do, and light (*sic*) was not given them to do it. Let us pity and forgive them! But better than pity, let us go and *do otherwise*. Human suffering did not end with the life of Burns.' This is very much like saying they were to blame, and they were not to blame; they could have done Burns a good, and they could not have done him a good, and

probably he himself would not have allowed them to do him a good. And it seems to mean that if they were instruments which Destiny might have employed for Burns's benefit, but which Destiny did not so employ, they are to be excused ; but if they were free agents, who had the use of their own will, and who did not use it to Burns's benefit, they are to be condemned.

But Burns himself has considered the subject of the relation of society to suffering genius from a non-personal standpoint, and has given his opinion with characteristic frankness, decision, and intrepidity, singularly refreshing after the contradictory inconclusiveness of Carlyle. Incidental mention of the name of the Scottish poet Fergusson was the occasion on which this opinion was parenthetically pronounced. For the ability of that too-much forgotten poet he had a great and genuine respect, which Fergusson's verses will be found to warrant ; for his untimely and tragic fate he had a sympathy peculiarly strong and tender. 'Oh, Fergusson !' he wrote—

' Thy glorious parts
Ill-suited law's dry musty arts !
My curse upon your whinstane hearts,
Ye Enbrugh gentry !
The tythe o' what ye waste at cartes,
Wad stow'd his pantry.'

Burns wrote these words in the summer of

1785, when his own misfortunes, present and prospective, were sufficient to have engrossed his attention. Less than two years after, when he was the 'lion' of literary Edinburgh, he had the courage to reiterate the curse in some verses which he wrote under Fergusson's portrait:—

'Curse on ungrateful man, that can be pleased,
And yet can starve the author of the pleasure!'

It seems to us that pecuniary aid, directly or indirectly given, if only given in time, would have saved Fergusson to his family, to Scotland, and to his better self. The situation he clung to was none of his choice. It stood between him and starvation. And dependent upon him at the age of eighteen were a widowed mother and her younger children. It was a situation which was encompassed with temptations, some of them peculiarly strong to a young man of his turn of mind and temperament. The monotony of task which it entailed—he was a copying clerk in a law office—naturally enough fostered a desire for the freedom and variety of such social intercourse as lay open to him after business hours. Fergusson was by instinct unusually sociable, and this very instinct, noble in itself, was one of the agencies, if it was not the sole cause of his ruin. Burns was not more emphatically a sociable man, and if his maturer

judgment and more powerful constitution could not save him from the penalties of social excess, a far less effectual barrier against the inevitable were the inexperienced youth and delicate frame of poor Fergusson. His miserable and early fate seems to us more tragic than that of Burns, while his conduct, all the circumstances of his condition duly considered, was less reprehensible. Chill penury, though it could not freeze the genial current of his soul, was yet able to bind him socially in a rigid position from which there was no deliverance. He had no profession, no trade ; and neither means nor leisure time to acquire the one or the other. Burns had many resources to which he could have shifted for a livelihood : he could, at the worst, have taken up the tools of cottar labour — ‘spades an’ shools, or knappin’ hammers.’ The only implement Fergusson could use was the pen—and the only paid work he could find in the world to do with it was the mechanical drudgery of copying law-papers. And this he was necessitated to do for a bare existence. Once or twice, before hope finally fled his uncomplaining spirit, he seems to have contemplated making an effort to free himself. Vague ideas of a competency to be made beyond the seas visited his mind—such as were afterwards to visit Burns’s. His boon companions, acting only according to the selfishness of their kind,

gave him no help in any attempt he made to realise these ideas. His presence ministered to their pleasure; his poetical powers and social accomplishments furnished a necessary part of their entertainment. One only of his friends showed a genuine friendship for Fergusson. This was a Mr Burnet (of whom one would like to know more), whose generous cheque for one hundred pounds, and still more generous invitation, all the way from India, are none the less to be remembered to his honour that they came too late. Alas! the body of poor Fergusson was already under the sod in Canongate Churchyard.

ROBERT FERGUSON was born in Edinburgh, on October 17, 1750. His father, William Fergusson, said to have been a man of more than common intelligence, was then a clerk in the service of the British Linen Company, and had recently come from Aberdeen. Young Fergusson was naturally of a delicate constitution, but active and vivacious, and of an ardent and inquiring turn of mind. His education may be said to have begun at the High School of Edinburgh, whither he was sent at the age of seven. Four years' attendance here fitted him for the advanced classes of Dundee Grammar School, whence, at the age of thirteen, he proceeded to the University of St Andrews, the holder of a Fergusson bursary, which entitled

him to a free course of the ordinary length in the Arts Faculty. Those four years at St Andrews were probably the happiest of his life. He may not have been a brilliant student, and perhaps was not altogether an exemplary one, but his amiable disposition and lively temperament, which, though inclined to fun, was without even the suspicion of malice, won for him the unusual distinction of being a favourite with professors and class-fellows alike. Even John Hogg, the college porter, though declaring him to have been a 'tricky callant,' acknowledged that he was a 'fine laddie for a.' One of his tricks was the successful assumption for a wager of the *rôle* of street ballad-singer, a character for which he was well fitted by the possession of a good voice. His poems contain several happy references to his student life. Here is one, the scene of which is the porter's lodge:—

' Say, ye red-gowns, that aften here
Hae toasted cakes to Katie's beer,
Gin e'er thir days hae had their peer,
Sae blythe, sae daft ;
Ye'll ne'er again in life's career
Sit half sae saft.'

But there were other recollections of the porter's lodge, and more was discussed than cakes and ale. John himself was a capable disputant on such academical questions as had

a scriptural side, ranking himself with the Faculty of Divinity against the Faculty of Arts, when these faculties seemed to take up antagonistic ground.

‘ I hae-na meikle skill,’ quo’ he,
 ‘ In what ye ca’ *philosophie*;
 It tells that baith the yird an’ sea
 Rin roun’ about :
 Either the Bible tells a lee,
 Or ye’re a’ oot !
 It’s i’ the Psalms o’ Dauvit writ
 That this wide warl’ ne’er should flit,
 But on the watters coshly sit
 Fu’ steeve an’ lestin’—
 An’ was-na he a head o’ wit
 At sic contestin’ ?’

It had been the intention of his family to educate Fergusson for the ministry, and he seems to have been making some preparations for entering the Hall, as the Theological schools in Scotland are called, when domestic matters summoned him to Edinburgh, and demanded his help in the maintenance of the family. His father had been dead two years, and his mother was feeling the pressure of poverty. The first thing to consider was, how the abilities of the young student could be most speedily utilised to the advantage of the household. At last, after anxious deliberation, it was decided that the widow’s brother, a Mr John Forbes, holding

a good position in Aberdeen, should be consulted on the subject, and to him, therefore, Robert was dispatched, with the strong expectation of finding, through his influence, the situation he was so eager to fill. He was then in his eighteenth year, a slenderly-built youth, of a complexion almost pallid, but pleasantly lit up by a pair of intelligent black eyes. The treatment he received at the hands of his uncle was perhaps the first rude shock to his sensibilities. A broad hint, which there was no mistaking, gave him very distinctly to understand that he was overstaying the time of a welcome guest ; and he was coldly advised, that after so much idleness at St Andrews, he should now apply himself to some kind of industry. Stung by the vulgar taunt and the heartless manner in which it was conveyed, Fergusson set off for home, on foot and penniless, and arrived in Edinburgh, exhausted in body, hope, and spirit. The consequence was a serious illness, from which he recovered to write the only verses in which he reproaches the selfishness of the world, and repines at the hardness of his lot. The verses, which have a purely biographical interest, are allegorical, and represent the poet in the pastoral guise of Damon lamenting the decay of friendship. Fergusson at length found employment as engrossing clerk in a lawyer's office ; and, with a change or two of employers,

the mechanical drudgery which the work of an engrossing clerk implies, was the sole and only service, which the world of Edinburgh—all the world he knew—apparently required of him. His principal relief from the monotony of the desk was the cheap and often coarse conviviality of the tavern, or a flying excursion to Fife. His poetical compositions seemed to have occupied little of his time. They mostly bear the marks of haste,—notably in their want of finish, but also in their general vigour. Even the most artistically conceived and executed of all his productions, his *Farmer's Ingle*, though full of repose, lacks finish; and, as a matter of fact, Fergusson was impatient to be done with what he had commenced, and revision was scarcely a part of his practice. He became a regular contributor to Ruddiman's *Weekly Magazine*, which, no doubt, helped to develop his poetical talent, but in a direction that at first seemed to encourage a vitiated taste. The affected and sentimental pastorals of Pope and Shenstone were then fashionable—they were never, and never could be, popular—and Fergusson, like Ramsay before him, felt, and to some extent yielded to, the force of the prevailing fashion. It is amusing, by the way, to observe the manner in which the editor introduces Fergusson to the readers of the *Weekly Magazine*. The number for February 7, 1771,

is before us as we write, and from it we extract the following notice :—

‘We have been favoured with three Pastorals, written by a young gentleman of this place, the style of which appears as natural’—there is really no irony here—‘and picturesque as that of any of the modern ones lately published.’

Then follows the first pastoral, ‘Morning,’ in the conventional manner so much admired then, so unspeakably wooden and wearisome now. Of course we have a scene of verdant lawns, bubbling fountains, and sportive lambkins, into the foreground of which Alexis and Damon are inanely ushered, while Ceres and Aurora and the other lay-figures of antiquity are scattered at random in the background. The fashionable literati and literatæ of those days affected to be enlivened by such paste-board compositions ; fortunately the members of ‘The Cape Club,’ facetiously self-dubbed the Knights of the Cape, had healthier, if coarser, instincts, which led them to prefer pieces in the Scottish vernacular descriptive of the social feelings they felt and the convivial life they shared. The knights met in a tavern in the depths of Craig’s Close, off the High Street ; Herd, the well-known collector of old airs, was Sovereign ; and Fergusson was Sir Precentor because of his fine voice and efficiency in

rendering 'an auld Scotch sonnet.' For the fine ladies and fine gentlemen who took in the *Weekly Magazine* Fergusson had Alexis complimenting Damon in the following polished lines,—

'Tis thine to sing the graces of the morn,
The zepher trembling o'er the ripening corn,
'Tis thine with ease to chant the rural lay
While bubbling fountains to your numbers play.'

Here, on the other hand, was the kind of fare he provided for the duly appreciative knights,—

' When big as burns the gutters rin,
Gin ye hae catcht a drookit skin,
To lucky Middlemist's loup in,
An' sit fu' snug
Owre oysters an' a dram o' gin,
Or haddock lug.
When auld St Giles at aucht o'clock
Bids merchant loons their shopies lock,
There we adjourn wi' hearty folk
To birl oor boddles,
And get wherewi' to crack our jokes
An' clear oor noddles.'

The conviviality of club-life, after business hours, was the rule in Edinburgh all through the latter half of last century; and the mysteries of *Hy-jinks*, as elaborately described by Ramsay and dramatically presented by Scott, were in general and almost of nightly practice among citizens of every grade and

degree of respectability. And yet poor Fergusson, because, falling in with the universal custom, he had the misfortune to succumb to it—partly from a generous excess of social sympathies, and partly from a too delicate constitution—has been held up to point the moral as a principal sinner and a prime offender. He certainly paid more dearly for his indulgence, but it is questionable if he was any worse than hundreds of respectable citizens of the time. He was a dutiful son, an affectionate brother, and, in the words of a correspondent of Burns who knew him well, ‘an inestimable friend, whose rich conversation, full fancy, and felicitous manner made him much sought after.’ A volume of his poems, first collected and published in 1773, came into the hands of the youthful Burns, and won for Fergusson’s memory, from the greatest genius and warmest heart of his country, a wreath of mingled admiration, love, and regret.

The history of the last year of Fergusson’s life is a subject much too painful to be given in any detail. It will be sufficient here to recall his mental derangement; the manner in which his friends entrapped him into a mad-house; his horrible reception by the unhappy inmates; his melancholy cell-life of two months, with the affecting incidents of his mother and sister’s visits; and his miserable death. The

desolate wretchedness of his situation needs not to be described. He died in a part of the Darien House, devoted by the city authorities to such unhappy cases as his own, on the 16th of October 1774. If he had lived one day longer he would have completed his twenty-fourth year.

The character of Fergusson, so far as it is explicitly known, was hardly of the kind to engage the attention or enlist the sympathy of a biographer of Carlyle's cast of mind. It seemed to be uninfluenced by any sense of the seriousness of life. To all outward appearance it was aimless and shiftless, frivolous and feebly dissolute. His life, like a rudderless boat, seemed to drift insensibly and helplessly to disaster. For such a disposition and such a life Carlyle's feeling was one of contempt.

The fact that Fergusson is silent upon the subject is no proof, however, that he was unconscious of the responsibility of life in general, or careless of the conduct of his own in particular. What secret struggles there may have been with temptation, what agonies of self-abasement on the failure of noble resolutions, what tragic sense of inherent inability to avoid the shipwreck which threatened and was inevitable—he has not revealed. He had not been in the habit of revealing himself in his verse, and probably his inner experiences were

too painful for expression. But some horror of his own weakness, and some ghastly anticipation of his fate, must latterly have haunted his mind. In this view of the matter, his silence is tragically eloquent. And, indeed, the contrast which the humour of his poems presents to his brief miserable life and dreadful death seems to us only to accentuate the tragedy. The subject was really one for Carlyle, if only he had looked into it. Poor Fergusson's life was scarcely less tragic than that of Chatterton.

Burns saw the tragedy of it, and seemed to perceive in the ruin of Fergusson some mysterious premonition of his own. His admiration of 'the glorious dawning' of Fergusson's genius was not more marked and sincere than his regret for his 'unfortunate' fate.





FERGUSSON'S VERSE.

SO long as the poetry of Burns is of interest to the student of literature, so long will the poetry of Fergusson merit some degree of attention, both because Burns was in more than one respect indebted to Fergusson, and because the verse of Fergusson contains many of those qualities which we so much admire in Burns's. That is to say, Fergusson is interesting for his relation to Burns, and interesting too for his own sake. It is matter of regret that so authoritative a judge as Carlyle should have in the same sentence ignored the relationship and denied to him every other claim upon our regard. Carlyle's favourite method as a critic is well-known. He dealt in contrasts, to which he gave point not more by generous appreciation on the one side than by merciless depreciation on the other. He levelled the wood to show the height of its tallest tree. This method

may be seen in operation in his famous and, take it all in all, deservedly famous *Essay on Burns*. It would, perhaps, be going too far to say that Carlyle discovered Burns to the world in this essay, but thus much may be advanced that the essay is infused with a sympathy genuine, manly and profound, approaching probably nearer to the popular feeling in Scotland on the subject, certainly meeting the popular wish more completely, than the estimate of any other critic. Yet here, while putting forth his gigantic energy to reveal Burns in what he conceived to be his true proportions, he practises the ruthless method of contrast so characteristic of his genius, and, for one of the effects, Fergusson falls a victim to it. This leafy sapling comes within the circuit of the woodman's axe, and is remorselessly shorn through. How, then, does Carlyle speak of the native models which suggested, if they did not inspire the masterpieces of Burns? Not only with undue depreciation, but with positive contempt. It is well to remember that Carlyle, when he thus wrote of Burns and Fergusson, was a young man of a little over thirty. He represents Burns as being 'without models or with models only of the meanest sort;' and again as having 'only the rhymes of a Fergusson or a Ramsay for his standard of beauty.' These assertions, in so

far as they bear upon the education of Burns, do not now receive general credence. Burns was a well-educated man, pretty conversant with such masters of thought as Shakepeare and Milton, and such masters of style as Addison and Pope. To them Carlyle's criticism cannot apply, though they do come within the scope of his language. The attack is directed upon native Scottish writers, of whom Fergusson is singled out as one of the representatives ; and it means, if it means anything, that, prior to Burns, Scotland owned no poetical literature quite deserving of the name. This was the judgment of Carlyle ; it was certainly and emphatically *not* the opinion of Burns. Burns, who on a memorable occasion quietly but firmly claimed to know something of his art, and who surely was the best judge of his indebtedness to Fergusson, neither despised nor depreciated his native models, but repeatedly, in every possible way, and invariably in terms of even impassioned sincerity, volunteered testimony to the worth of Ramsay, and, more markedly, of Fergusson. Not that he rated the poetical work of Fergusson at a higher value than that of Ramsay, but that his human sympathies were evoked by the personal miseries of the younger poet, unfortunate enough and near enough to his own times to be viewed as his 'elder brother in misfortune.'

Burns's testimony to Fergusson's worth was expressed in his talk, his letters, his poetry, and his actions. Scott's recollection of Burns, general and fragmentary though it was, included a strong impression of Burns's extravagant admiration of Ramsay and Fergusson. 'He talked of them with too much humility as his models,' said Sir Walter, meaning self-humility. In a letter, of date 6th February 1787, Burns, then in the zenith of his fame, writes of Fergusson, that he was a poet and a man 'whose talents for ages to come will do honour to our Caledonia.' The complimentary references made to Fergusson in Burns's verses are numerous. Now it is—'O for a spunk o' Allan's glee or Fergusson's!' Again it is 'famous Fergusson!' and 'Fergusson, the writer-chiel, a deathless name!' And there is the well-known stanza, beginning—

'O, Fergusson, thy glorious parts
Ill-suited law's dry musty arts!'

But perhaps the most generally convincing proof of the sincerity of his admiration for Fergusson is to be seen in that inscribed tombstone in Canongate Churchyard, Edinburgh, which he caused to be erected at his own charge, to the perpetual memory of Fergusson.

There is, in short, no doubt about the reality of the admiration and sympathy that Burns

habitually expressed for Fergusson. But, it may be objected, in regard to the admiration, Burns was not a competent judge. The objection, if made, would be a bold one, and yet no other is possible, to those who accept the dictum of Carlyle, that Fergusson was a poet-aster and the meanest of models. Here it may at once be admitted that Burns's judgment of English poetry was not seldom at fault. Few will subscribe to the unhappy bit of criticism in *The Vision* :—

‘ Thou can’st not learn, nor can I show,
 To wake the bosom melting throe
 With Shenstone’s art,
 Or pour, with Gray, the moving flow
 Warm on the heart.’

And fewer still to the criticisms contained in these lines—if, indeed, they be Burns’s—

‘ In Homer’s craft Jock Milton thrives,
 Eschylus’ pen Will Shakspeare drives,
 Wee Pope, the knurlin’, till him rives
 Horatian fame ;
 In thy sweet sang, Barbauld ! survives,
 E’en Sappho’s flame.’

To take Mrs Barbauld for Sappho *rediviva* (they had nothing in common but their sex) and to accredit Shenstone and Gray with un-

usual power over the emotions, was probably to mistake conventionalism for originality.

When, however, the subject is Burns's ability to estimate the poetical products of his native speech, we are, at every view of it, compelled to acknowledge him the master. In the field of Scottish poetry he is within his own domain. Here he is a king, whose word is law, whose decisions are final and unerring. Himself wielding the language with the freedom and vigour of a creator, he of all men could best estimate its use by others. He has estimated Fergusson's use of it, and the man Fergusson, too, by the ideas which he expressed by its use, and the astounding thing is, that the critics, while lauding Burns's use of the Scottish idiom, ignore or despise his judgment of its use by others.

The warmth with which Burns manifested his admiration for Fergusson, was partly due to his own obligations to him. There would be no detracting from the magnificent fame of Burns, in stating those obligations at their full length. The statement would be bare justice to the earlier poet: it would be his due honour. It would, besides, establish the continuity, the very remarkable continuity, of the Scottish school of poetical thought and expression. It would at the same time furnish to those who are jealous for the fame of Burns,

the best means of estimating the superiority, or rather the supremacy of his power ; here, it could be said, is the loan, and here the transcendent, the miraculous use made of it.

It will suffice at present briefly to indicate Burns's indebtedness to Fergusson. It was in respect of theme, form, style of treatment, and even language. Carlyle arrogates great credit to Burns for discovering his themes in quarters so unlikely to supply them. 'The metal he worked in,' says Carlyle, 'lay hid under the desert moor, where no eye but his had guessed its existence.' A slight acquaintance with Ramsay and Fergusson will serve to show that they had made the discovery here solely accredited to Burns. Before Burns they found poetical themes in the characters they met and talked with in street and field, and in the scenes they saw from their own doorways. They had so far done Burns a service, that they had familiarised and popularised those subjects to Scottish readers. This means that they had gathered an audience for Burns. He had so far the advantage of their labours. His opportunity was to develope what they had begun. A score of his themes were directly suggested by theirs. It is saying, I am well aware, a great deal, yet it is not too much to say that Ramsay introduced Burns into almost every department of poetry in which he excelled.

Scottish song, as we now define it, was commenced by Ramsay; he may be said to have invented it. Burns's songs are of quite the same species—fuller, more glowing, and more fragrant. 'Lochaber no more,' 'Polwarth on the Green,' 'The Young Laird and Edinburgh Katey,' foretold the richer, more varied, and more spontaneous melody of 'The Gloomy Nicht,' 'Bonnie Jean,' and 'Highland Mary.' Again, Burns's depiction of humorous scenes is a development of Ramsay's. Here, probably, the interval between the two poets is at its shortest. There are whole stanzas of Ramsay's composition that might stand alongside of Burns's ordinary work in this department. 'The Jolly Beggars' belongs to the same school of poetical painting as the continuation of 'Christ's Kirk on the Green.' Yet again, the rhyming epistles which are so characteristic a part of Burns's poetry, and which contain so much of the poet's philosophy of life, were suggested by the correspondence of Ramsay and his now little-known contemporary, Hamilton of Gilbertfield. One must also make mention of Ramsay's well-nigh inimitable conduct of a tale—he was a first-rate story-teller—and find both in 'The Twa Dogs' and 'Tam o'Shanter' traces of his art and influence. Burns's satire, more especially as levelled against the Kirk, was his own, but it is inter-

esting to observe that Ramsay, too, at one time meditated a similar service to candour and common-sense in matters religious, and claimed the power of doing it. Fergusson's range was narrower than Ramsay's, being confined, indeed, to humorous descriptions of low life, and faithful reproductions of rural life and rustic character. His 'Farmer's Ingle' is his masterpiece, too little known, but by those who know it placed on a level with 'The Cottar's Saturday Night' in point of genuine artistic treatment. Artists will probably prefer it to 'The Cottar's Saturday Night.' It was a wonderful production for a youth of little over twenty. His humour was congenial with that of Burns, who studied it more closely than Ramsay's—of which, indeed, it was a development.

The suggestion of 'The Cottar's Saturday Night,' 'The Brigs of Ayr,' 'The Holy Fair,' 'The Ordination,' 'Halloween,' etc., will be found in 'The Farmer's Ingle,' 'The Mutual Complaint of Plainstones and Causeway,' or, perhaps preferably 'The Twa Ghaists,' 'Leith Races,' 'The Election,' 'Hallow Fair,' etc. The traditionary metrical forms which Fergusson employed, Burns also adopted. Carlyle refers to them as if he meant to imply their incapacity as poetical vehicles. The best proof of their capability lies in the fact that a

great proportion of the genius of Burns was conveyed by them to the world. These forms, so far as they are peculiarly Scottish, are three in number, exemplified in 'The Address to the Deil,' 'Halloween,' and 'The Epistle to Davie,' respectively. Two of them Fergusson handled with an ease and vigour which left little to be desired. Their capability as moulds for poetical thought he fully demonstrated in isolated stanzas before Burns poured the flood of his genius into them. It is, however, in general style of treatment and in language that Burns's indebtedness to Fergusson is most marked. A broad, comprehensive, common-sense, even homely, and where possible, humorous view of the subject to be operated upon was characteristic of Fergusson as it is of Burns; they approached the subject, stalked it, so to say, in the same manner; ran it down, and made sure seizure of it in the same bold, straightforward, confident, and masterful style. It would be easy to quote stanza after stanza from Fergusson, which, in point of treatment and diction, might readily be taken for Burns. Here are a few passages which should recall very similar lines of Burns:—

' In July month, ae bonny morn,
When nature's rokelay green
Was spread owre ilka rig o' corn
To charm the rovin' een,—
Glowrin' aboot I saw a quean, etc.

“ And wha are ye, my winsome dear,
 That taks the gate sae early ?
 Whaur dae ye win ? if ane may speir ;
 For I right meikle fairly
 That sic braw buskit laughin’ lass
 Thir bonny blinks should gie,
 And loup, like Hebe, owre the grass,
 As wanton and as free
 Frae dool this day ! ”

“ I dwell amang the caller springs
 That weet the Land o’ Cakes,
 And aften tune my canty strings
 At bridals and late-wakes,—
 They ca’ me Mirth,” etc.’

Cp. *The Holy Fair*.

‘ Mourn, ilka nymph and ilka swain,
 Ilk sunny hill and dowie glen ;
 Let weeping streams and naiads drain
 Their fountain-head ;
 Let echo swell the dolefu’ strain
 Sin’ Music’s dead.’

Cp. *Elegy on the Death of Captain Matthew Henderson*—
 a noble development.

‘ Withoot the cuissers prance and nicher,
 And owre the lea-rig scud ;
 In tents, the carles bend the bicker,
 And rant and roar like wud.’

Cp. *The Holy Fair*.

And the following short passages are Burns all
 over :—

‘ Noo morn wi’ bonny purpling smiles
 Kisses the air-cock o’ Sanct Giles.’
 ‘ When faither Adie first pat spade in
 The bonnie yaird o’ ancient Eden,’ etc.

‘ The denner dune, for brandy strang
 They cry, to weet their thrapple ;
 To gar the stamack bide the bang
 And wi’ its ladin’ grapple.
 Then grace is said—it’s no’ owre lang—
 The claret reams in bells ;
 Quo’ Deacon, “ Let the toast round gang,
 Come, here’s oor noble sel’s ! ”

‘ Up louns ane, wi’ diction fu’ ;
 There’s lang an’ dreich contestin’,
 For noo they’re near the point in view,
 Noo ten miles fra the question
 In hand that night.

‘ Fareweel, my cock ! lang may ye thrive,
 Weel happit in a cosy hive,’ etc.

And, not to extend the list unnecessarily,—

‘ The country folk to lawyers crook—
 “ Ah, weel’s me o’ your bonny book ! (*bulk, body*)
 The ben-most pairt o’ my kist nook
 I’ll rype for thee,
 And willin’ ware my hinmost rook
 For my decree.”

‘ But law’s a draw-well unco deep,
 Withooten rim folk out to keep ;
 A donnart chiel, when drunk, may dreep
 Fu’ sleely in,
 But finds the gate baith stey an’ steep
 Ere oot he win.’

Burns’s opinion of Fergusson has been stated,

and some proof of his indebtedness has been led. It now remains to examine Fergusson's verse on its merits, independently of the critics, and independently of the extreme youth of the author and his ungenial social circumstances. Let us begin the examination by a frank admission that his English compositions are commonplace at their best. But turn to 'The Daft Days,' 'The Election,' 'The King's Birthday in Edinburgh,' 'Caller Oysters,' 'Caller Water,' 'An Elegy on the Death of Scots Music,' 'Elegy on John Hogg,' 'Elegy on Professor Gregory,' 'Braid Claith,' 'The Sitting of the Court of Session,' 'The Rising of the Session,' 'Hallow Fair,' 'Leith Races,' and 'The Farmer's Ingle.' A perusal of these pieces, which, of course, contain the best specimen of Fergusson's work, and which run to considerably over a thousand lines of verse, will secure a verdict, it may with confidence be asserted, entirely in consonance with the sentence of Burns that Fergusson was a true poet and an original genius. It will satisfy the examiner that, while Fergusson was not indeed literally and without limitation Burns's 'elder brother in the muses,' he was, nevertheless, not more unworthy to serve as a model to Burns than Marlowe was unworthy to serve as a model to Shakespeare, and that he was in some respects well up to Burns's ordinary high level.

Burns would willingly have been the author of much that stands above the name of Fergusson ; —that can be gathered from the various praise which, in all sincerity and in a manner at once gracious and graceful, he so freely awarded him. It is remarkable, though not to be wondered at, that the qualities for which Burns admired Fergusson's verse are precisely its distinctive features. There is the *glee* which he inherited from Allan Ramsay, and there are the *bauldness* and the *sleeness* which were in a peculiar sense his own. Fergusson's glee was his humour, neither forced, nor satirical, nor sardonic, but spontaneous, genial and ingenuous. It found him his themes, and inspired him with the social, generous, and not seldom manly sentiments which his poetry expresses. His boldness of style and treatment has already been adverted to: it is visible in the originality of his ideas as well as in the maturity of his idiom and utterance. He knew what he meant to say —a knowledge nearly as rare as it is needful— and spoke it clearly, going straight to the centre of his subject. His command of epithet was copious ; he was generally picturesque, and often melodious with a full round note. His *sleeness*, or slyness, was his tact, or 'pawkiness,' to use a Scottish expression, and included therefore both taste and intelligence, not excepting a certain restraint which, so far from

neutralising his boldness, rather directed and guided it.

The severest thing in the way of criticism that can be said against Fergusson is that his range was narrow. It is here that his inferiority to Burns is notorious. And yet he gave promise of a broader development, which his premature death prevented. It was amongst the social scenes of humble and chiefly burgher life that he was most, and most frequently, at home. These scenes he presents with life-like vividness, and very often at little expense of words. Here is an interior drawn with the hand of a Wilkie :—

‘ For whisky plooks (*pimples*)
 That brunt for ooks (*weeks*)
 On town-guard sogers’ faces,
 The barber bauld *his whittle crooks*,
 An’ scrapes them for the races.’

Here is a rustic interior, not less artistically designed :—

‘ In rangels round before the ingle’s lowe (*flame*),
 Frae gude-dame’s mouth auld-warld tales they hear
 O’ warlocks loupin’ round the wirri-cowe (*hob-goblin*)
 Or ghaists that win (*live*) in glen an’ kirkyard drear,
 Whilk *tousles a’ their tap* an’ gars them shak’ wi’ fear.’

It is a back view we get of the listeners with their hair standing, fear-disordered, against the glow of the farm kitchen fire. Fergusson is

rarely pathetic, but kindly feeling and toleration are everywhere abundant. He is not insensible of the caprice with which Fortune bestows her favours, but there is no discontentment. He merely remarks—

‘Blythe they may be wha wanton play
In Fortune’s bonny blinkin’ ray ;
Fu’ weel can they ding dool away
 Wi’ comrades couthy,
An’ never dree a hunger’d day
 Nor e’enin’ drouthy.’

Fergusson’s masterpiece is ‘The Farmer’s Ingle.’ With respect to his other poems it is unique. It is his one effort on a rural subject, and the only sample of his serious style. For its realism it is of undoubted value. There is neither caricature nor false colour in the picture, and the appeal is rather to the heart than to the fancy. The critic who wrote of it as being a mere list of the contents of a farm kitchen must have been hopelessly dull, or lamentably destitute of rural associations, or irredeemably bad-tempered. It is a sketch indeed, but a sketch drawn by a master. It is Fergusson’s most ambitious piece, and reveals the variety and range of his power in a way which no other of his poems even attempts to do.

Altogether the originality of thought and maturity of style of this youth of twenty-four were marvellous. But it is idle speculating on what he might have been, and might have done, had length of years been allowed him.





THE FARMER'S INGLE.

MAKING incidental mention of Fergusson's name in the Heart of Midlothian, Scott proposed to designate him the Poet Laureate of the City Guard, because his verses referred so frequently to those military conservators of the peace ; but it will give a more intelligible idea of the position of Fergusson to describe him as the Poet Laureate of Edinburgh from 1770 to 1774. By both birth and upbringing he was a true son of the city ; man, therefore, rather than nature, was his theme. The towns with which, by residence, he was acquainted were Edinburgh, Dundee, St Andrews, and Aberdeen ; but it was Edinburgh with which he was longest and most intimately connected. Edinburgh furnished him with most of his subjects, and it was to an Edinburgh audience that he almost exclusively looked for applause. Once,

however, he strayed beyond the bounds of city life for a subject, which he found in the Farmer's Ingle, and which he treated with such ability as to make one wish he had oftener meditated the rural muse. In any classification of his poems, *The Farmer's Ingle* must occupy a place by itself; not only because it is his one notable effort on a purely rural subject, but because it is the only worthy specimen of his serious style. All his other pieces which deserve preservation are avowedly humorous. *The Farmer's Ingle*, though not without a chance touch of humour, is a poem seriously sympathetic with the simple round of rustic life at a farm, and accurately descriptive of it. Poetical consideration apart, it has a historical value in the clear, careful, and correct picture which it presents of a phase of domestic farm-life in the east of Scotland in the latter half of last century. The original of the picture Fergusson probably found in some farm near St Andrews, when he wore the red gown and rejoiced in the freedom of an undergraduate.

The subject, when Fergusson selected it, was of a kind virgin to poetical treatment in the Scottish vernacular. There had been occasional references to the simple lives of common men in verses of an earlier date, but this was the first Scottish poem which seriously,

directly, and exclusively dealt with the subject. It was an attempt to invest a transcript from homely, every-day country-life with an interest which should be independent of caricature and false colour, and should appeal rather to the heart than to the fancy. The idea may have been got from the classical pastorals, or it may have been suggested by one or other of those brief bits of descriptive verse with which Ramsay introduces the dramatic scenes of the Gentle Shepherd. However it originated, the idea was ambitious, and was, I venture to say, admirably carried out. The result may never have been popular, but it constitutes, nevertheless, the masterpiece of Fergusson. It offers to the critic the best means of testing the strength and variety of the poet's power. Here we have picturesque glimpses of rural scenery, artistic compositions of rustic figures, touches of humour, finely-wrought though faint characterisation, portraiture, a sense of the supernatural, and a genuine sympathy with childhood, toiling manhood, and age, which once or twice makes near approach to pathos. An outline of the poem may be given.

The time is early winter—more particularly, it is an evening in the 'back-end' of the year when infant frosts are beginning to bite. The farm-labourers are leaving their various work. The herd, assisted by his dog, drives the cattle

home from pasture; the maid-servants, who have been winnowing corn, are glad of the rest which gloaming brings; and thresher John, tired in every limb, is shutting the barn door. Within the farm-house preparations have been made for their home-coming; the spacious kitchen is clean and comfortable, there is a huge fire of peats and turf in the ample chimney, and supper is just ready. The goodman himself enters, and his eye bespeaks approval of the goodwife's management, 'ilka turn is handled to his mind.' There is abundance of savoury kail-brose, hot buttered scones, and home-brewed ale,—

'Weel kens the gudewife that the pleughs require
A heartsome meltith, and refreshing synd
Of nappy liquor o'er a bleezing fire;
Sair wark and poortith downa weel be joined.'

The entire household, master and servant, mistress and maid, sit down at the same table to supper. Let no one despise their homely fare. The kail-brose of auld Scotland is the 'wale of food' both to work upon and to fight upon. It was the fare of those heroic ancestors of ours who turned the Romans, overthrew the Danes, and won the independence of the country. After supper coherent conversation begins, much promoted by the genial influence of the cheering 'bicker' or mug of strong ale.

The weather is always an important topic with country folks ; and that, therefore, they discuss first, not as a needless prologue to their after-talk, but as a matter of the first magnitude. The rustic mind is a meteorological register which can furnish date and details of the past weather, for many months in retrospect, at command. But the efficiency of the register can only be maintained by constant use ; so the genial showers of vanished summers and the destructive speats of well - remembered winters are recalled to reproduce the feelings they formerly evoked. Then follows the news of kirk and of market—the approaching marriage of Jock and Jenny, or, it may be, the misfortune which brings Marion to the cutty-stool. The children are now quiet, listening to their elders,—

‘The fient a cheep’s amang the bairnies noo,
For a’ their anger’s wi’ their hunger gane.’

They are seated together in front of the fire, which with the dimly-burning *cruizie*, sheds an enlivening but unsteady light through the shadowy apartment. It is now that the ancient granny opens to them the supernatural world, of which, with her wrinkles and her cracked and quavering voice, she herself almost seems to be a denizen. Her tale is of warlocks, and hob-goblins, and

ghosts, of drear glens and silent churchyards. The effect which her narration produces upon her listeners is picturesquely noticed: 'it touzles a' their tap.' It is a back view we get of them, against the glow of the fire. Granny's belief in fiends and fairies is firm, and in the mischievous devilries they work about a farm. Here Fergusson introduces a beautiful appeal for sympathetic patience with old age,—

' O mock na this, my friends ! but rather mourn,
 Ye in life's brawest spring wi' reason clear ;
 Wi' eild oor idle fancies a' return,
 And dim oor dolefu' days wi' bairnly fear :
 The mind's aye cradled when the grave is near.'

All this while granny is busy spinning thread, not with a wheel ; she believes in the traditional distaff. The old lady is more than worth her salt : her 'e'ening stent (*task*) reels she as weel's the lave.' What is she busy with at present ?

' On some feast day the wee things, buskit braw,
 Shall heeze her heart up wi' a silent joy,
 Fu' cadgie (*happy*) that her head was up, and saw
 Her ain spun claithing on a darling oy (*grandson*)
 Careless tho' death should mak the feast her foy (*fare-
 well feast*) !'

The goodman, whose disposition is finely indicated by the confidence with which both collie and baudrons (the cat) approach him

to win his attention is meanwhile reposing on a kind of rustic sofa, which is described as 'a warm and canny lean for weary banes.' But the fore-night is passing: it is time to issue instructions for the morrow's work. An oat-stack may have to be taken in and threshed out; or some ploughing may have to be done; or a sack or two of corn, a melder, may have to be taken to the mill to be ground. The goodwife, too, has her commands for the maids—to take a final look through the byres, and see that none of the cows has slipped a band, and to be careful at milking time that a particular 'crummie' does not indulge her favourite vice of kicking over the full milk pail. And now the whole household begin to wax sleepy. The fire is getting low, the oil in the lamp is nearly done. They retire to rest—'upon the cod (*pillow*) to clear the drumly pow.' Sound sleep till sunrise is the reward of toil. The concluding stanza is a kindly *envoi*,—

'Peace to the husbandman and a' his tribe,
Whase care fells a' oor wants fra year to year !
Lang may his sock and coulter turn the glybe,
And banks o' corn bend down wi' laded ear !
May Scotia's simmers aye look gay and green,
Her yellow hairsts fra scowry blasts decreed !
May a' her tenants sit fu' snug and bien,
Fra the hard grips o' ails and poortith freed,
And a lang lasting trade o' peaceful hours succeed !'

The subject of this poem suggested the subject of 'The Cottar's Saturday Night,' and supplied Burns with several hints besides. The verse is the same in both poems, and is well adapted to the nature of the subject. The time is the same in both; it is when 'November chill blows loud,' and 'the shortening winter day is near a close.' It is the same rustic world we are ushered into, and the events of an evening are recorded in both. Burns has improved on his model in the introduction of the youthful lover, and the episode of Family Worship. The farmhouse, however, is higher than the cot, and Ferguson's subject admits of an ampler variety of characters and events—which he did not fully take advantage of. What he has thus lost in artistic effect he partly makes up for in greater fidelity to truth. He depicts the scenes of an ordinary work-day evening, while Burns selects the night which precedes and prepares for the Sabbath. The Farmer's Ingle is perhaps only a sketch to what it might have been, but it is a sketch drawn by a masterly hand, and full of suggestive points. The suggestiveness of the poem is one of its leading features. It is full of pictures. In this respect it reminds one of Milton's *L'Allegro* and Burns's *Tam o' Shanter*.



THE BIRTH OF BURNS AT KILMARNOCK.

TO speak of a Burns celebration in the sultry month of July is like the suggestion of Christmas at midsummer—it seems altogether out of season. For is it not the poet's birth that we celebrate, and are not all our traditions of the subject connected with the rigours of winter, and associated with the festivities of the Daft Days? Was it not when the infant year was five-and-twenty days begun that a typical January blast blew into the lap of old Scotland one of the best hansels she ever received in the person of Robert Burns? Quite true! and we have all agreed, and faithfully fulfil our agreement, to keep holyday every 25th of January in perpetual remembrance of the event. But an author has the privilege of two birthdays, and if he

is, like Burns, an author of commanding note, the day that introduced him into the world of letters is not less interesting, at least to literary men, than the day that ushered him into existence is of interest to the general public. Burns's literary birth, it may be remembered, took place some time in the latter end—probably on the very last day—of July, in the year 1786. It was then for the first time he appeared before his fellow-countrymen as a candidate for poetical honours by the publication of a sample book of his poetry. And from that day to this, a completed century's interval, he has never ceased to be before the public, and the public have never ceased to feel the influence and to talk of his poetry. It was surely fitting that the hundredth anniversary of an event of such importance should be celebrated ; and the good folks of Kilmarnock did well to take the initiative, seeing that it was in their town that Burns's literary birth took place.

The circumstances in which Burns first appeared as an author are among the most interesting in his chequered life. He was at the time joint-partner with his brother Gilbert in the tenancy of Mossgiel, a cold-bottomed, high-lying, unproductive farm of some hundred and twenty acres. Only two and a half years of the lease had run, but they were sufficient to show that, with the hardest work and the

strictest economy, there would be difficulty in keeping the wolf from the door. Almost absolutely true was the description of his condition at Mossgiel given in the opening verses of 'The Vision,'—he was 'half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit.' He was living on positively not more than seven pounds a year! His father was dead—had happily died just before Mossgiel was leased. His unfortunate liaison with Jean Armour had brought down upon him the censure of the Church, and was threatening him with the terrors of the law. The Armours repelled his advances, and repudiated his offers of reparation—would have nothing friendly to say to him, would have nothing to do with him, but drive him from the country. In short, life in Scotland, such life as he lived, and as he foresaw he was doomed to live, was simply intolerable. The only outlet from despair, the only escape from ruin, was by severing the cords, dear as some of them were, that bound him to his native land: he could then try Fortune where she might be less vindictive—with a cancelled record of the past, and amid the new surroundings of another hemisphere. With this forlorn hope in view, he had arranged with a Dr Douglas, of Port Antonio, in Jamaica, to serve for a term of three years as bookkeeper, or rather overseer of the negro labourers on his plantation in that island, at

a salary of thirty pounds a year. He was to make the voyage on board the *Nancy* (Captain Smith), advertised to sail from the Clyde some time in October. His first intention, which was the dictate of necessity, was to work his passage out ; but the unexpected pecuniary success of his book, published, as we have seen, on the 31st of July, gave him the means of purchasing a steerage passage. The whole gain from his poems amounted to twenty pounds ; so that, after paying his fare of nine guineas, he had only ten guineas left. Everybody knows how near Scotland came to losing him. His chest was already on the way to Greenock, and he himself, skulking in the country to escape a legal process which he believed the Armours had raised solely from revenge and covetousness, and which, therefore, he was determined to baffle, was on the point of setting out to join the *Nancy*, having already taken a final poetical farewell of his native Ayrshire, when an Edinburgh letter was put into his hand just in time to save him from the degradation of slave-driving, and from the obscurity of exile. This was Dr Blacklock's letter to Burns's friend Dr Lawrie, the minister of Loudon, and contained the advice that the poet should make an appeal to an Edinburgh audience by means of a new edition of his poems. The vision of fame, influential friends, and a

possible independency by the pen, which this historical letter not unreasonably conjured up in the mind of the poet, was too powerfully attractive to be resisted. He was 'sheltering in the honoured shade' of Edinburgh in the ensuing November, with all thoughts of emigration completely, if only temporarily, swept like a hideous nightmare from his mind.

Burns, as we all know from his poems and letters, was diffident of publishing. When he was 'that way bent,' as he tells us—

‘Something cried *Hoolie!*
I rede ye, honest man, tak tent—
Ye’d show your folly.’

Even when the final resolution was bravely taken, there was at the same time lurking in his mind a mingled diffidence and recklessness very characteristic of the poet. ‘This is just the last foolish action I intend to do,’ he wrote, ‘and then turn a wise man as fast as possible.’ He published partly by subscription, issuing in April what he called *Proposals*, by which he secured at least as many names as ensured him against loss. Of those who gave their names to the subscription list, two may be noticed for very opposite reasons. The one, Mr Aiken, of Ayr, the person to whom the ‘*Cottar’s Saturday Night*’ was dedicated, took as many as one hundred and forty-five copies. Yet it was only

after much hesitation on Burns's part that a copy of the Proposals was sent to him. The hesitation arose from a mistaken idea of Aiken's opinion of him—'I would not be beholden to the noblest being ever God created if he imagined me to be a rascal.' There is much revelation of Burns's character in the words. The other subscriber, dissatisfied with the book, returned it to Wilson, 'Wee Johnnie,' the printer of the edition, who not less curtly than pithily entered the fact—the phenomenon, we should say—in his account book, 'So-and-so, a blockhead, refused his copy.' The entire edition of close upon six hundred copies was exhausted before the end of the ensuing August. It was an octavo volume of considerably over two hundred pages, and sold for three shillings. The contents, which had chiefly been composed at Mossgiel, included such excellent specimens of his poetical powers as *The Vision*, *The Addresses to the Deil*, *the Field Mouse*, and *The Daisy*, *The Cottar's Saturday Night*, the Dialogue of *The Twa Dogs*, and some of his best Epistles, especially that to *Davie*. The bulk of the purchasers were people in the same station of life as Burns himself, small farmers, farm-servants, and tradesmen; but there were critical and no less kindly eyes on the book, too, such as those of Mrs Dunlop, Dr Lawrie, Professor Dugald Stewart, and last

but by no means least, Henry Mackenzie, the Man of Feeling. Mackenzie was the first to introduce Burns to the reading public of Edinburgh, and the first to hail him from the arena of letters as a genius of no ordinary rank—if there be any merit in discovering what was patent to even the most casual glance; for there was not a page of the criticised volume which was not sparkling with the unmistakable traces of superior genius.

Mackenzie's notice appeared in No. 97 of his essay periodical, 'The Lounger,' and at once drew the attention of the literati of the Scottish capital to the person of the poet who was then in their midst. It is curious to observe that Mackenzie, addressing Scotsmen, makes great lament over the circumstance that Burns's poetry was expressed in the Scottish dialect. They would have great difficulty, he feared, from their ignorance of Scottish idiom and phraseology, in appreciating at their true worth the many and varied beauties of the new-risen poet. Still he would counsel his readers to make the acquaintance of the book and persevere in its perusal, and for their comfort and ease in reading he would state that no inconsiderable part of the poems, such as whole stanzas in 'The Vision,' would be found in point of language to deviate but slightly from the most approved English

poetical models. From this incidental account of the state of the Scottish language in Edinburgh a century ago, we should be justified in inferring that the average modern Athenian knows more (though that be little) of the vernacular than did that ancestor of his who took in 'The Lounger' a hundred years ago. And how is this? How has it happened that the decay of the Scottish language, which was already far advanced a century ago, is at least no farther, if so far, advanced to-day? The publication of Burns's poetry will furnish the answer. It arrested that decay, and, living or no longer current, the language in which it has been enshrined can never even in the remotest future be altogether lost and unknown. It contains too much valuable thought and too much priceless feeling to be overtaken by a destiny so disastrous.

Burns's first published work has been spoken of as a specimen book of his poetical abilities, meaning by the expression not merely that it gave evidence of what he could and was yet to do, but that it offered for examination only a portion of what he had already done. 'The Jolly Beggars,' for instance, which Carlyle, not without some reason, claims as a masterpiece of Burns's versatile genius, much more indicative of his reach and resource of mind than the

popular favourite, 'Tam o' Shanter,' was not included in the volume, and, indeed, did not emerge from the obscurity of manuscript till the last year of the century. Yet there is clear proof that it was one of the Mossgiel compositions, and written at least a year before the Kilmarnock edition left the press of John Wilson. So completely, we may notice in passing, had it left its author's mind, that in 1793 he had no recollection of it except the general subject and plan, and that it contained a song which he had rather liked, something that went

' Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.'

Burns was to write after the publication of his first book for just ten years more, and much that he composed in the last decade of his life was of the highest merit, but his powers had already reached their full maturity by the year 1786. A wider range of field was to be his, but greater brilliancy of imagination and greater vigour of language it was impossible for him to attain. And he was never to be so active.

Burns's influence through the century for which it has now been felt has been so great that one runs little risk of exaggerating it. It has been great on British literature, and

powerful beyond estimate on the national life. The brilliancy and vigour alike of his conceptions and his expression of them, caught and have kept public attention from the first. What he imagined was so strongly imagined, and what he said was said so well, that people could not choose but give him audience. He had the ear of the nation. The advantage was a princely one, and it was not an advantage that Burns abused. His serious doctrines—and there was no mistaking when he was serious—were always manly, not seldom in their tendency indeed divine. They were scornful, in the most scathing degree, of selfishness, hypocrisy, and oppression. They were ineffably tender to innocence, inexperience, and repentance. They ennobled labour, enfranchised thought, glorified life, exalted humanity. To these issues has their influence been working for now three generations. Who can doubt, who dares deny, that with the popularity, nay, the affection, which Burns's name still freshly commands, this influence is one of the life-pulses of the nation? Let any one imagine what our literature would be with Burns's songs, poems, and epistles withdrawn and destroyed. It would be a greater loss to our national life—and little short of paralysis—if the influence they exert were suddenly to cease.



THE OLD HARVEST-FIELD.

'In hairst at the shearin'
Nae youngsters are jeerin';
At e'en i' the gloamin'
Nae swankies are roamin'
'Bout stacks wi' the lasses at bogle to play.'

WE have it on the word of an ancient annalist that the harvest was collected in some parts of Gaul nineteen hundred years ago, by a decapitating machine propelled through the standing corn. The propeller was a bullock, the machine an open box placed on wheels, with a toothed apparatus horizontally fitted to the fore part of it, and the *modus operandi* was a sort of heckling. The projecting comb caught the stalks just under the heads, and, as the machine moved forward, the precious heads were torn off between the close-set spikes and fell into the receiving box. The whole of the straw crop

was, of course, lost where such a system of reaping was in use. It seems to have been sacrificed to a greedily expeditious method of appropriating the grain. The haste which recommended such a method, and the waste which it involved, make such a harvest seem to us, with our traditions and associations of the stooky field, a thieves' harvest rather than that of thankful men.

It was hardly likely that a method of reaping at once so rude and so wasteful should to any considerable extent supersede the hook and antique the primeval traditions of the harvest-field. It was thought by its inventor, no doubt, to be an improvement on the old-established method; and it cannot be denied that it contained some idea of the modern mechanical reaper, which is threatening, with every probability of fulfilling the threat, to revolutionise the harvest-field, and to antique the ancient services of the hook and the hand. In this view of the subject, that old Gaulish engine of ox, box, and heckle, may claim in the achievements of its modern representative, a long-delayed victory over the primitive but popular hook. But in spite of its disuse and disappearance, the hook will remain to all time coming the symbol of work in the harvest-field. The rising and later generations may have no personal knowledge of its ser-

vices, but the sickle lives for ever endeared to the imagination in our popular literature. There it suggests a condition of life which is fancied to have been perennial in the world's golden age, but which is with each pursuing autumn less and less likely to recur in human history. Art with her hurry and her hundred hands is rapidly removing from our waking life the fragmentary memory of the age of gold in those rural felicities which the sickle symbolises.

Science, especially since her coronation in the Crystal Palace in 1851, has effected many changes which are not in every aspect of them improvements. To some people she is breaking connection with the past too completely. She is bringing us much material good, and some *immaterial*, but not the less real evil. Her gains, though great, have not been cheaply won. She has given the scattered groups of mankind acquaintanceship with a wider brotherhood, but she has also slackened the ties of ancient friendships, and broken up, as Newton broke up the spheres of Ptolemy, many a cosy little world hitherto content to sit within the ring of its own homely wisdom and happy ignorance. She has multiplied in machinery the power that lodges in human arms in order to save the bodies of men from the indignity of slavery ; but she has set idle

in the same proportion the skill that inhabits in human brains. She has sent into the domain of agriculture engines and automata that have neither a fear of God nor a care of man, that have abstracted half its beauty from the primeval industry, and reduced to the minimum the sense of filial dependence upon a special providence. She has forbidden song and excluded sociality from the harvest-field, dimmed the golden sheaves, and weakened the charm which filled the reaper's imagination with the romance of Ruth and the poetry of Joseph's dream.

Let me describe in a few rambling notes the harvest-field of fifty years ago. Old folks will not be sorry to have some of its phenomena recalled, and the younger generation who have no memories may find in the record glimpses of a life of which they can hardly now hope to have personal experience.

Oats and barley were the favourite field crops in Scotland fifty years ago. They were not only best adapted for the soil and the climate, but they were most immediately useful, and commanded a sure market. Wheat, which is now grown on perhaps every farm, was then very rare. Pease and beans were also a rare crop, about which the farmer had little or no anxiety. The white crop, more especially in the harvest season, absorbed the

whole of his care. The black crop had his attention when there was nothing else to attend to, or when attention to anything else was unavailing. Wet days, which occasioned a suspension of harvesting work among the oats and the barley, were utilised for the shearing of pease and beans. The barley, then as now, was commonly the first crop of autumn. All farm seeds were sown in spring, excepting the wheat seed, which was broad-cast in October.

The principal work in the farm year preceding the grain harvest was the getting-in of the hay. There was almost always an interval, however, between the grass and the grain harvests. Advantage was taken of the interval to lay in a year's coals, if coal-pits or coal-depots were within a reasonable radius. Then were to be seen long strings of carts making such a show and commotion in the villages through which they passed, *en route* to the coal-hill, as to bring weavers to their doors, and arrest even the games of children. The children would count and dispute about the number of carts, while the adult population would interchange opinions, and indulge community of sentiment on the number and names of the farms represented. The jocks, proud of their charges, and the interest which their passage evoked in the breasts of the town bodies, would augment the commotion and

clamour by bawling to their cattle, and brandishing their brass-bound whips. Their return with loaded carts would be looked for late in the afternoon or at gloaming. Along with this driving or *ca'ing* of coals, went on the furrowing up of the turnips, which were a late crop. And meanwhile fed by dews and rains, and strengthened by drying winds and warm suns, the stately grain matured and mixed—that is, showed patches of yellow among the green—and finally was ready for the sickle.

The season of the grain harvest, everywhere distinguished as *the* hairst, usually commenced early in September. More particularly, it might begin in the latter half of August on lowland farms, and in the middle portion of September on upland or hill farms. Roughly speaking, we may say it lasted a month. Male harvesters were fee'd for four weeks, wet and dry. It was well anticipated that they would have *lie* time, as it was called. They were said to *lie* when they were not engaged in harvest work proper. This would happen in wet weather, or when the corn in some of the fields was not yet ripe enough to be taken. They were employed about the farm in other work. The female harvesters, on the other hand, were fee'd for the dry weather; and, when their services could not be used, would go home till there was a prospect of clear

skies and dry fields. The time of hairst was of the same length on all farms, as a rule, no matter for their variations of size. If the farm was big, there was a necessity, of course, for a larger band of harvesters. But the ears whitened and hardened just as fast or as slow on a farm of four hundred acres as on one of forty.

With respect to wages, a man's fee for the harvest season might be two pounds in money, and his keep for the term of engagement; a woman's, thirty shillings with maintenance. Reapers were not seldom engaged on this covenant for the harvest, were it longer or shorter than the normal month.

The reaper's food was plain, but plentiful and wholesome. He began the day with work, and after two hours of it was revengeful for breakfast. It was brought to him to the field at eight o'clock, porridge fragrant as furze-blossom and new milk white as the petal of a mountain daisy. He supped with a stook at his back and his heels on the stubble, and probably with a horn spoon, out of a capacious, thick-walled wooden *caup*, which kept up a lasting, equable warmth unknown to crocks or pigs, and very comforting to the knees. With every mouthful he took down the fine relish of buoyant, sun-blessed air, which spiritualised digestion. He was not fed again till one o'clock. About that time a

halflin—that is, a youth too young for man and too old for boy—drove a cart with a cask of ale and a basket full of scones into the field, and the workers had dinner. The browst, which was from the local brewer's, was known as *sma' ale*, and a better slockening drink 'the sun-burned harvester with August weary' could not desire. Each reaper had a cogful. In a small field it was served out from pails. The scone was round and thick; its composition, now a lost art in our experience, required the presence of oatmeal and barley flour. There was no accompanying cheese or costlier butter, and yet it was palatable—that it was tissue-forming there never was doubt. Indeed, a shearer's scone was as much a treat at harvest time and just as appropriate to the season as carvey cakes at Hogmanay, and shortbread on Hansel Monday. The reaper had three meals a day; the last, supper, was taken, never in our knowledge *partaken*, in the farm kitchen at seven o'clock, and consisted, like the morning meal, of porridge and milk.

The harvester's working day, it will thus be seen, was from six in the morning till seven in the evening, which, in September, is till dusk. The day was divided for meals and rest in the following manner:—Breakfast hour, from eight to nine; pipe-time, half an hour for a smoke and a rest, at eleven; dinner hour,

from one to two; pipe-time again, half an hour at five. After seven the harvester was free. His work entailed much and often continuous stooping, trying to both brawn and breath, but it was agreeable, never lost the charm of novelty, and was conducive to the development of the social sentiment, all in such a degree that the typical reaper was a merry, frank, gamesome fellow, ready for a ploy or a prank before bed-time, and, if young enough, even for a dance on the shorn rigs at the meal hour. Tired though they were physically, yet a whole fieldful of harvesters would prove the abundance of animal spirits in their company on the squeak of a fiddle, and, like the peasants whom Goldsmith fell in with on the Loire banks, they 'would dance forgetful of the noon-tide hour.' Evening, however, was the natural season for such amusements as music and dancing, and not seldom would one farm be visited by the harvesters of another in the neighbourhood, their approach announced by the strains of a fiddle and the laughter of girls, and reels and jigs engaged in on the shorn rigs *plena luna imminente*. The hardest driven of all harvesters were the farm serving-maids. House-work required them to be stirring before five o'clock in the morning; then they worked with the specially engaged harvesters all day; and after seven in the evening their services were still

further in request till ten or even eleven. The full year's fee of those healthy, and hearty, and happy but hard-worked girls was not more than six pounds, in some instances barely five pounds.

Perhaps the commonest name for the harvesters was *shearers*. They came for the most part from the villages and little towns in the neighbourhood of the farm on which they gave their services. They were mostly weavers and tradespeople of rural instincts and up-bringing, glad, therefore, of the change in their mode of life and occupation which the harvest season brought, and commonly finding service on the same farm year after year. It was only required that they were willing workers and noways inclined to quarrel. It was comparatively rare that a whole body of harvesters found fault with their employer. The likeliest source of debate was the sour ale or the mouldy scones which were sent out to cheer the reaper's heart at midday. The unhappy halflin, who immediately but innocently managed the commissariat, on such occasions ran a risk of being deluged with the damaged liquor or pelted with the faulty bread. His report would bring up the master of the farm, and the offence would be discussed, apologised for, discontinued, and forgotten. The benefits accruing to the village community from personal co-operation in the harvest field were

physical, social, and moral. It afforded an opportunity to such sedentary craftsmen as weavers, tailors, and shoemakers to lay in a stock of health, observation, and good humour that helped to carry them happily through the next eleven months of the year. It gave neighbours the means of knowing each other more fully, re-knitted the ties of brotherhood, removed or minimised differences, and multiplied those little mutual obligations upon which so much of the happiness of life depends. It created also a freer and franker public opinion, which is almost always on the side of a practicable and healthy morality. It should further be noted that the exchange of ideas among people of all ages, both sexes, married and unmarried, and following such different callings as those of blacksmith, slater, and schoolboy, in addition to what have been already mentioned, made up a fund of information and enlightenment on a great variety of subjects which must have ministered in many ways to the general good.

The harvesting implement fifty years ago, and for a hundred fifties probably before then, was the sickle. But there were two kinds of sickle—the toothed or saw sickle, and the knife or scythe sickle. The former was going out of use at the time referred to, very much to the dissatisfaction of the farmer, who preferred it

to the knife-hook, because it made cleaner stubble. The knife-hook, however, was lighter to wield among the corn-stalks, and as it was mainly a reaper's question, it carried the day. The toothed sickle performed its function of severing the stalks by being pulled against the handful in the reaper's grasp, and the action required considerable exertion, as the stalks were broken rather than cut. The knife-hook lightened the reaper's labour by cutting both when going in among the victual and when being drawn home. Of course it was a more dangerous weapon, and the learner was almost certain to slice a left-hand finger or two before he acquired a dexterous use of it.

There was naturally a division of labour when the operations of the harvest-field were in full swing. The master's place was behind the workers, and his office was that of general superintendent. He saw that the work was done clean; checked all injudicious striving among the reapers, which only *brokkit* the corn—that is, wasted it—and by his presence prevented laziness. A bandster—that is, a man who bound the loose bundles of cut corn into sheaves, and stood them into shocks or stooks at convenient intervals—kept six reaping hooks busy, the wielders of which were known as his *bandwin*. The bandwin included two men and four women, all shearing, and a woman doing

usually as much as a man for less money. The man made the ropes with which the bandster fastened the sheaves, and did scarcely anything else more than the woman. Boys came to the field to make ropes after the scythe and the reaping machine made their appearance ; but now their services are dispensed with, science having provided the farmer of to-day with an automatic reaper that rolls to his feet bound sheaves out of the standing corn. There was no raking together of stray ears in a hook-shorn field. Gleaners came in, with tacit permission of the farmer, after the stooks were led away to the stackyard, and their little lapfuls and bundles, made up with patient and even painful industry, where bare feet reddened the stubble, guaranteed that no part of the bounty of Ceres was lost. The proportion of harvesters to farms of the same acreage varied, of course, with the area under crop. There would probably be two bandwin on a two-pair farm—that is, a farm which was worked by two pairs of horses. The horses had a holiday during harvest, and were put to grass till the ‘leading’ set in.

While it stood in stooks the farmer counted his field’s produce, and the reapers their work, by the number of *threaves*. The threave was a fixed unit of measurement, and, for oats and barley, consisted of two stooks of twelve sheaves each. Fourteen sheaves composed a stook of

wheat. The sheaf was, of course, of determinate size. A sheaf of oats or barley required to be ten inches in diameter, measured at the band, and a sheaf of wheat twelve inches. When reapers were paid by the piece—that is, directly in proportion to the amount of their work, and not by the time for which they promised their services—their wages were calculated at so much per threave. Threepence was the ordinary allowance for harvesting a threave of oats or barley, and fourpence for one of wheat. The farmer looked to the straw crop to recompense him for the outlay that went in reapers' wages. If the straw paid the cost of shearing it was well.

Given a clear blue September sky, a warm sun smiling benevolently on thousands of happy farms, and a brisk cooling wind none the worse with a breath of the bracing north in it, and the harvest field showed to the best advantage. It presented to the passing wayfarer, who loitered to survey it, a busy, picturesque, and joyous scene. It looked like the progress of a dramatic game. The dress of the reapers, especially of the women, was delightfully effective to the artistic eye. It consisted of a petticoat, a short gown—more properly, a jacket—of white or striped cotton, and a white linen or straw bonnet, known as a *crazy*. But the girls were oftener bare-headed. Their

dress was light, and did not impede their movements; at the same time it showed off a neat ankle and a well-proportioned figure to the best advantage. The men worked in their sleeves, and whatever variety of costume they displayed, their work was not of a kind to soil it; it was always clean looking. Joking and jesting, love making and laughter went on in circumstances so favourable for both social and secret intercourse among the sexes. And with it all there was an air of repose resting on the field, and tranquillising the hearts of the reapers, which it is impossible to expect within sound of machinery. Burns incidentally but graphically describes this leisure feeling of the old harvest-field, in recounting some of his early experiences to the guidwife of Wauchope House. 'I mind it weel,' he says,—

‘ When first amang the yellow corn
A man I reckoned was,
And wi’ the lave ilk merry morn
Could rank my rig an’ lass;
Still shearing an’ clearing
The tither stookit raw,
Wi’ claivers an’ haivers
Wearing the day awa’.’

The love-making, too, that went on in the hairst field he has described; it was there, indeed, that he first felt the charm of female loveliness, as he has confessed in the poetry of both his prose and his verse,—

‘On that hairst I said before,
My partner in the merry core,
She roused the forming strain.
I see her yet, the sonsie quean
That lighted up my jingle,
Her witching smile, her pawky een,
That garr’d my heart-strings tingle :
I fréd, inspiréd,
At every kindling keek,
But bashing and dashing
I fearéd aye to speak.’

His prose is even more confidential and expressive:—‘I did not well know why I liked so much to loiter behind with her when returning in the evening from our labours, why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an Æolian harp, and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious *rantann* when I looked and fingered over her hand to pick out the nettle-stings and thistles.’ A more beautifully idyllic scene than these perfect lines portray and suggest has never, perhaps, been represented by painter. One wonders that no artist in colours has yet appropriated the subject. Who said that Burns could not write English?

At the conclusion of the barley harvest, which was first over, the reapers were treated to the *bear* barrel—not to ale, but the finer juice of *bear*, the spirit of John Barleycorn, whisky—a glass or two to each; and a choral dance thereafter in the barn. As the harvest

of the year approached completion a strife sprang up among the reapers, which had for its object the taking of the *maiden*. The maiden was the last handful of the harvest which the fields had to offer; it was the last *pickle*, of two dozen stalks or so, to be cut down on the farm. The cry arose, 'Wha tane the maiden?' and the name was received with cheers. To have taken it was a long brag among the younger shearers. Sometimes a small quantity of rooted corn would be concealed by design under a coat or a shawl, and by-and-by, when the maiden was believed to have been taken elsewhere, it would be publicly disclosed and appropriated by the deceiver, probably some modest, merry-eyed lassie, who had then the honour of having secured the true maiden. The maiden was tied up with ribands and presented to the farmer's wife, who gave it the chief place in the principal room of the farmhouse, above the mirror and between the sheaves of peacock's feathers on the mantel. There it remained carefully preserved throughout the succeeding winter, often, indeed, till the rape of a new Proserpine replaced it in the following autumn.

Then came the great harvest festival of the kirn. It was properly celebrated on the night of the day upon which the maiden was taken. The leading might be not only commenced,

but well advanced on the occasion — one-half of the year's produce in stack and the other half in stook; for shearing and leading could go on simultaneously in different fields. The kirn had nothing to do with the work of transporting the shorn grain to the stackyard; it was the shearer's feast, and was held when the last stalk was cut. Before sitting down, in their rustic attire, but tidy and clean, to the well-earned banquet in the farm kitchen, the harvesters' hearts were attuned to the special cheerfulness of the hour by individual interviews of a private nature with the farmer. They were called into his room, and were paid their money, with a pleasant remark from the master. Full purses, with health and a clear conscience, make light spirits; and by-and-by full stomachs would make light heels. The farmer himself, his commodious arm-chair dragged from the fireside to the floor, presided at the feast table; and first there was the rural delicacy, unknown to towns-folks, of 'cream crowdie a.' Each person at the table, including, of course, the harvesters, but also the wives and children of the ploughmen on the farm, was served with a mixture of fresh nut-fragrant oatmeal and delicious cream, drawn from the kirn or churn, by way of demonstrating the applicability of the name to the festival. This is a treat, by-the-bye, much

more palatable than a stranger to its merits would infer from the recipe. A rough elementary plenty of rural fare covered the board, more than sufficient to withstand an evening's attack even of hungry harvesters. The viands were beef and mutton, both boiled; oatmeal cakes, crisp and curly; barley-meal scones or bannocks, made supple with sweet butter; country cheese, both mild and 'bauld,' the latter veined with blue; and for drink, there was whisky as much as was liked, and milk for those who preferred it. One sense satisfied, another claimed indulgence in its turn. When the palate had been duly appeased, the ear grew alert for regalement. Then songs were sung and stories told far into the night, interspersed with that species of small talk known to kindly country folks as haivering and joking. Occasionally the conversation would for a brief moment or two take a serious turn to the subject of the farm-victual just secured or the price of food. The fear might be expressed that the coming year was to be a dear one for meal, but the farmer was assured that the meal would be good, for the victual was got 'fine in'—that is, in good condition. But the spirit of the hour was one of extreme buoyancy, and would soon recover itself to the indulgence of a dance, social or solo, or a rant, or both combined. Here is a bit of rant

which strangely lingers in our memory after many years. The rant itself was of infinite length, and was half-said half-sung by a lean weather-battered vivacious old fellow, to his own accompaniment of hand-clapping, while his brother, a very Mercury of an aged *carle*, clattered and danced in the midst of the approving rustics. It is but a fragment we remember,—

‘ Hey up, Shoosie Dick,
How, Jenny Shaw !
Black-dog an’ Tear’em
An’ Towser an’ a ! ’

Meanwhile a wan moon stared in through the upper panes upon the rustic revelry, or the wail of dark October winds was heard, in pauses of the mirth, in the desolate stubblefields, or nearer among the rowans sobbing on the west gable. Early next morning the shearers, except, it might be, the bandsters, were away to their several homes. The harvest season of another year was over. The bandsters remained to assist in stacking the still out-lying victual, and making it ‘richt an’ ticht in thack and raip.’

There were late kirns then as now—notably in 1839.¹ Burns speaks from hearsay of an exceptionally late one, to which we have heard of scarcely a fellow in the lowlands in this

¹The kirn of that year on a large Ochil farm was within a few days of the November term, N.S.

century. It was in the harvest season of 1714. An aged carline is the supposed authority—

‘The year afore the Shirra-muir,
 I mind as weel’s yestreen ;
 I was a gilpy then—I’m sure
 I was na past fifteen :
 The simmer had been cauld an’ wat,
 An’ stuff was unco green,
 But aye a rantin’ kirn we gat,
 An’ just on Hallowe’en
 It fell that nicht.’

Hallowe’en, as everybody knows, is the last night of October, old style. But Burns also speaks of harvest being late in the district around Kirkliston, near Edinburgh, at the end of August 1787.

After the kirn had been duly celebrated, the leading-in was continued till the whole of the cereal produce was carted to the yard. The foreman of the farm built the stacks, as he had also sowed the fields, but the less difficult art of thatching could be performed by any of the ploughmen. On big farms there was usually one enormous stack or rick on which the foreman expended all the resources of his architectural art, and by which he established his claim to foremanship ; it was his *chef d’œuvre*, his diploma piece, so to say, and was known as the king. It served as a specimen or pattern to the under-graduates of the agricultural profession. To supply the straw necessary for

thatching and roping the ricks, a few bolls of corn were often threshed out, fresh from the field. In wet weather the female reapers engaged for the harvest were employed in making the straw fit for thatching purposes—which they did by pulling it out and laying it in bundles straight and even. They also made straw ropes, of about twenty yards each, by means of the thraw-crook. In wet harvests the ricks were built small, with big *bosses* or *kilns*, to admit air and secure ventilation of the stuff in the stack. These bosses were known as *fause* houses in some parts of the country, such as Ayrshire. A two-pair farm might have a stack-yard of three dozen ricks, the value of which, at the time we speak of, would run from ten pounds to twelve pounds or fifteen pounds per rick.

After the grain harvest was secured, potato lifting began. Then, after the stubble butter—the richest of all—was made, the land that had not been sown out in grass with the year's barley was broken or stirred by the plough to keep down growth. Then turnips were pitted against the expected winter storms. Threshing went on now and then all through the winter—a stack was 'taken in,' as it was called. There was no idleset about the farm, nor yet monotony of work. Life was leisurely busy, and the world was not too much with the farmer.



A WEET HAIRST.

'Aquosus Eurys arva radat imbribus.'—HOR. Epod. 16.

SANDY, my frien', I ken it's sair,
I ken fu' weel your basket's bare,
Your store o' savin's toom ;
I'm wae to see your waefu' looks
Oot owre thae fields o' draiglit stooks,
An' fodder fit to soom.
Wi' markets cheap an' wages dear
Ye've been at mickle cost,
An' here's the hervest o' the year
An' a' your labour lost.
Perplexin' an' vexin'
The ways o' Nature seem ;
The haste o't, the waste o't—
It's like an evil dream !

What touch o' comfort can ye feel !
It's sad, it's angersome atweel
 To ken that ane like you,
Wha sawed gude seed in gude dry land,
An' spared nae sweat o' head or hand,
 In hopes to cairry thro',—
Wha watched it fra' the wee green breer
 To autumn's stately show
O' mony a gallant gowden spear
 In serried rank an' row—
 Maun see't now, an' dree't now,
 Lie rottin' i' the rain !
 The mense o't, the sense o't,
 Nae mortal can explain !

But human reason's but a spark,
A caunle's glimmer i' the dark ;
 An' he's the wisest wicht
Wha doots his wisdom and his sense
An' puts his trust in Providence
 Till dawns the dear daylight.
Sandy, my frien', a bairn-like faith
 That a' thing's for your gude
Will lead ye safe through life an' death,
 Thro' fear o' fire an' flude.
 Tho' crosses and losses
 Mar a' the life o' men,
They're sent till's ;—their end till's
 We'll aiblins ae day ken.



*A PLEA FOR SCOTTISH LITERATURE
AT THE UNIVERSITIES.*

WE live in times of rapid transition. A spirit of cosmopolitanism is abroad, which, not without its benefits, is not without its evils. Science has furnished it with wings. It finds them in electricity and steam. Among its bad effects is the effacement of national distinctions by the imposition of a uniformity of ideas, taste, and character in the denationalised unit of society. Burns prayed for the time when man to man the world o'er would brither be an' a' that. But he did not pray for the abolition of the Scottish language and the destruction of the national sentiment. Universal uniformity of *character*—if the expression be not absurd,—and let us therefore rather say universal monotony of *manners*, is

not the consummation of brotherhood so devoutly wished. What the poet in his capacity of prophet prayed for and foresaw was sentient and not automatic life ; it was the creation of a living, loving, many-sided and free community of nations, and not the manufacture of wooden images cut to a selected pattern.

There is much in national life that is worthy of preservation, and the preservation of which is not inimical but healthily helpful to the formation of a bond of brotherhood the wide world over. It is a great mistake, if it is not sheer madness, for a nation to discountenance and finally cut off as objects which cannot be contemplated without a feeling of shame, all its idiosyncracies, peculiarities, and distinctive growths in order to make way for the introduction of foreign fashions and alien novelties, the cherished, and, it may be, the deservedly and properly cherished products of a neighbouring people, but no more adapted to the inhabitants of the country among whom they are introduced than the palm is adapted to the soil, and climate, and scenery in which the pine bourgeons and grows. It is not a change in hereditary institutions, unless they stand self-condemned, that is desiderated in this reforming, or rather uniforming nineteenth century ; but a change in their front and attitude, where they have become jealously exclusive,

or ungenerously hostile and aggressive. Here, in this ancient kingdom of Scotland, now an honourable and vital part of the great British Empire, we run much risk, from the very liberalism of our sentiments, of losing, if not our national character, at least the more visible signs of it in the necessary intimacy of our union with powerful and populous England. The disappearance of those characteristic signs, in so far as they are the exponents of what is noble, beautiful, and true in the national history and life, is much to be lamented; for they serve as monuments and memorials to each successive generation, the educative value of which lies partly in the closeness and vigour of their appeal, and partly in their maintenance of what the French have happily termed *prestige*. Remove these, or suffer them by neglect to decay, and Scotland, though unconquered by the sword, becomes a species of English province, which has no native national past, and whose share in the glorious ancestral possessions of England dates no farther back than the time of the Union. The roots of the national life are mutilated, if not absolutely cut away, at that point.

One of the most characteristic signs of Scottish national life is to be found in the literature and literary history of the country. Her Kirk and her literature have been Scot-

land's most distinctive monitors—are her most distinctive memorials. Of her Kirk nothing need be said here except that, with not more desert, it has had better fortune than her literature. The condition of Scottish literature at the present time is simply deplorable. It is not alone that the language, but that the knowledge of it, is dying out, and the literature expressed in it is becoming a sealed book except to the initiated. It exists as a living speech in much of its traditionary purity and perfection on our isolated uplands and in rural nooks and pastoral wildernesses, remote from the great thoroughfares and centres of life and enlightenment. But lift and transport to the flags of Princes Street a cock-laird who has grown ancient among the Ochils, and his attire and demeanour will be less outlandish than his speech will prove, in the strictest sense, uncouth to well-nigh every man he accosts in a vain endeavour to 'speer' his way out of the town. To young men under thirty his tongue will sound like a hitherto unclassified stray from Babel. They will laugh at a language in which their grandfathers expressed their wants and wishes, and which their fathers may know but no longer use. It is not forgotten that many, belonging chiefly to the humbler classes in our large towns, use what is commonly regarded as the vernacular speech ;

but much of it, and the quantity is increasing, is English, both in word and idiom, pronounced with a semi-Anglified and wholly hybrid accent. It is unavoidable, and, some¹ may think, hardly to be lamented, that the old language of the Scottish lowlands should die away from the lips of men; but it is a real misfortune that the knowledge of it should decay. It enshrines a literature, especially in the department of poetry, of which no nation need be ashamed—of which, one who knows it may venture to say, any nation may be proud. Mr Matthew Arnold, referring lately with little sympathy to Scottish literature, and claiming it as a contribution to the vast storehouse of English literature, declared, as well he might, that it is a far more serious and important contribution than that of America. A Scottish critic, who has felt its influence in himself, and seen it upon the national life, would speak of it with more knowledge, more praise, and more enthusiasm, as the names of Wilson, Hogg, Scott, Burns, Fergusson, and Ramsay, among the modern, and Dunbar, Lyndsay, Douglas, and Barbour, among the ancient ‘makkers,’ crossed his memory, like the brightest links in a chain of brightness, to which, it would not be forgotten

¹ It is pleasant to know that Mr Ruskin is not among them. ‘Your native tongue,’ he writes to a young Scot, ‘is the sweetest, richest, subtlest, most musical of all the dialects of Europe.’

the anonymous authors of our lovely legendary ballads added a precious and peculiar lustre. It is bad enough that as a people we have ceased to remember our patristic poets, and that we are ignorant of the fact that there was an earlier Burns, of no less vigour and versatility than the later, in William Dunbar; but even the later Burns is becoming ancient, and his genius, like the light enclosed in a lantern—to borrow Cowper's metaphor—is but dimly appreciated by our modern city youth. His very songs, partly from a supposed coarseness in their sentiments, partly from their unintelligibility, and partly from a wretched taste that drops as vulgar whatever is popular or rustic, are seldom or never heard in what is known as fashionable quarters; and it would seem that they require the patronage and exposition of a well-known ex-professor to make them fairly popular among the gentility of the provinces. It is a state of matters unjust to the memory of our native authors, disgraceful to our patriotism, and detrimental in many ways to our national interests.

The question arises: What should be done to arrest the decay of interest in our national literature, and to maintain and revive in that respect one of the fading, because neglected, influences which have a beneficial effect upon our national life? Costly reproductions of our

earlier, and cheap reprints of our later, literature are not enough. Our Universities should take up the question, and should answer it by founding a Chair or at least establishing a few lectureships for Scottish literature. We have a Chair for the preservation and elucidation of the Celtic language and literature. Scottish literature, it is safe to say, is a more interesting, more important, and more national subject; and the want of a recognised and accessible authority for its interpretation is becoming more and more clamant. At present it is merely left to shift for itself. The professors of English literature are overburdened with their subject proper, and have not the time, if they had in every case the inclination, to attend to Scottish literature. Some of them have other subjects—such as rhetoric in the case of Edinburgh University—associated with the main duties of their office. It is not only the study of the literature of Scotland proper, but the means of estimating distinctly Scottish influence on English literature and in English literature, and of safeguarding the language now in extreme danger at the hands of impertinent writers ignorant of Scottish idiom as well as Scottish diction, which need to be provided for. It seems a strange thing that no provision yet exists at any of our four Universities for an object so

worthy, so necessary, and so national. Perhaps we wait till Germany shall have shamed us into showing our piety. When a Chair has been founded at Berlin for the exposition of Scottish literature, we may *then* expect to hear some talk of establishing another in Edinburgh.





LAMENT FOR THE LANGUAGE.

THEY'RE wéarin' by, the gude auld
times

O' hearty rants an' hamet rhymes
In ilka biggin' said an' sung
I' the familiar mither tongue,
When lads an' lasses had convenin'
Roun' the wide ingle at the eenin'!

They're wearin' by, the gude auld days
O' simple faith an' seemly phrase,
Atween the maister an' the man
In ilka corner o' the lan'
When faithfu' service, gien wi' pleasour,
Was kent an' coontit for a treasour.

They're wearin' by, the gude auld lives
O' leal an' thrifty men an' wives ;
They're wearin' oot, the gude auld creeds,
That met a simple people's needs ;
The auld Scots character an' laws
That made oor kintra what it was—

Esteemed at hame, envied abroad,
Honoured o' man and loved o' God ;
Oor nationality, oor name,
Oor patriotic love for hame—
I 'maist could greet ; I can but sigh—
They're wearin' oot, they're a' gaun by !

The gude auld honest mither tongue !
They kent nae ither, auld or young ;
The cottar spak' it in his yaird,
An' on his rigs the gawcie laird.

Weel could it a' oor wants express,
Weel could it ban, weel could it bless ;
Wi' a' oor feelin's 'twas acquent,
Had words for pleasour an' complent ;
Was sweet to hear in sacred psalm
In simmer Sabbath mornin's calm ;
An' at the family exerceese,
When auld gudeman, on bended knees,
Wrestled as Jacob did langsyne
For favours temporal an' divine,
Hoo did its fervent accents roll
The load o' sin frae aff the soul !
It had an ease an' strength o' wirds
That fell'd like mells an' glanc'd like swirds.
Nae fine affeckit foreign soun',
Wi' frequent flexions up an' down,
But a straucht-for'at free-born speech,
A manly tongue to learn or teach,

Whaur ilka say was to the point,
An' ilka word in ilka joint
Gruppit the sense it carried wi' 't,
An' stappit aff wi' decent speed—
An' ilka letter gat its due
The first page o' the Carritch¹ thro',
An' ne'er a lisp was tolerated,
An' 'lock' for 'loch' like Sawtan hated,
An' aye the 'r,' tho' crank awee,
Gaed birlin' aff the mooth-ruif free.

It was as yauld an' bauld a tongue
As roun' the wa's o' Bawbel rung,
An' better rung, for plank or plaister ;
Nae doot its author was a maister—
At least a foresman—owre the people,
The masons at the muckle steeple,
Wha swuir at lairge, and dang'd and deyvled,
That awfu' oor the tongues were reyvled !
An' it had words were a' its ain ;
A gowlock was a gowlock thain ;
A soughin' wind among the trees
Was bonnier than a gentle breeze ;
The shut o' day was aye the gloamin',
An' daunder was the word for roamin',
An' true was leal, an' loss was tyne,
An' long ago was auld langsyne.

¹ The Shorter Catechism, usually printed with the alphabet on the first page.

Ye've heard, when May was new begun,
Amangs' the gress a peepin' wun'
That shook the blades an' swith awa'
As saft a breath as bairn could blaw!
Belyve it creepit owre the lee,
An' up an' sang upon the tree
A strain sae plaintive that to hear it
Ye thocht some disembodied speerit,
Frae heaven forwander't far its lane,
Was greetin' to win back again.

Anon it loupit to the wud,
An', like a wulbeast nane can hud,
Seiz'd on the patient pines an' tare
An' whirl'd their branches high in air,
An' raged an' roared frae glade to glen
Till the haill wud, fra' en' to en',
Thro' a' its caves an' corners rung,
An' to the tempest rock'd an' swung;
Whyle cattle, moaning, fled the bield,
Th' umbrageous wud was wont to yield.

As wide could range the auld Scots tongue;
'Twas meet alike for auld an' young,
For jeast an' earnest, joy an' wae,
For cursin' an' caressin' tae.

'Twas gentler in a hushaba
Than a wud-muffled waterfa'

Or cushats wi' their downie croon
Heard through a gowden afternoon,
Or streams that rin wi' liquid lapse,
Or winds among the pine-tree taps.

'Twas sweet at a' times i' the mooth
O' woman moved wi' meltin' ruth ;
But oh ! when first love was her care,
'Twas bonnie far beyond compare.

'Twas mair sonorous than the Latin,
Cam' heavier on the hide o' Satan,
When frae his Ebal o' a poopit
The minister grew hearse an' roopit,
Bannin' wi' energetic jaw
The author o' the primal fa'.
But if the poopit's sacred clangour
Was something awesome in its anger,
Gude keep oor Southlan' freen's fra' hearin'
A ouch red-headit Scotsman swearin' !

But wha would hae audacity
To question its capacity ?

The mither croon'd by cradle side,
Young Jockie woo'd his blushin' bride,
The bargain at the fair was driven,
The solemn pray'r was wing'd to heaven,
The deein' faither made his will,
In gude braid Scots :

—A language still !

It lives in Freedom-Barbour's lines,
In bauld Dunbar it brightly shines,
On Lyndsay's page in licht it streams,
In Border ballads haunts my dreams ;
An' like a simmer mornin' plays
On Ettrick banks an' Yarrow braes.
It lives for aye in Allan's play,
In Coila's sangs, the Shepherd's lay,¹
The bird-like lilts fra' Paisley side,
The Wizart's tales² that flew sae wide,
Forbye the vast an' varied store
O' later ballants by the score :
The gude auld Scots !—a language still,
Let fortune vary as it will.
Though banish'd from oor College ha's,
It frames the siccar auld Scots laws ;
Though from the lips, of speech the portal,
It lives in Literature immortal.

But oh, alas ! the waefu' change,
The customs new, the fashions strange,
Sin' the auld patriarchal days
O' sober thocht an' simple phrase !

In thae auld days a heaven o' calm
Hung owre the kintra like a balm
That still'd the fractious fretfu' blude,
An' made a tranquil neighbourhude.

¹ Kilmeny.² The Scottish Novels of Sir Walter Scott.

Ilk townie was a human fauld ;
The young grew up amang the auld,
An' learnt their ways, an' settled down
Contentit i' their native toun.
The sergeant whyles, sae brave an' braw,
Wad wile a flichty chiel' awa',
An' noo an' than some book-lear'd birkie
Wad tak' a hankerin' for a kirkie ;
But few they were to cities ran ;
The village was a family than,
That fand in ilka hoose a hame,
An' kent a neebour's bairns by name.

Nor think it was a humdrum life,
A lang-continued wearin' strife,
Withouten stop frae Yule to Yule
For the bare wants o' milk an' meal.
Ilk cottar had his ain bit land
He labbour'd wi' an eident hand,
Afore the meikle farms came in,
Like Pharaoh's cattle lank an' thin,
An' swallow'd up—it's e'en a sair joke—
The bien bit crafties o' the puir folk.
Oh, wae the day the puir man tint it,
His cot an' pendicle ahint it !
Tho' short his boonds, an' sma' his gain,
A BIT O' SCOTLAND was his ain.
What better guard or guarantee
O' patriot love or loyaltie

Amang the common kintra cless—
The kintra's mainstey in distress—
What stauncher safeguard could ye get
Than the auld crofter system yet?

That neuk o' Scotland's auld gray plaid
Was his—his shelter an' his shade ;
An' jealous was he of his corner,
Quick to resent the scoff of scorner,
An' ready for his richt to stand
As ony lordling in the land.

Nae tourin' schemes o' foreign gain
Beyont the wide Atlantic main,
Nae sinfu' thochts o' wild ambition
Garr'd him despise his low condition ;
His twa-'ree acres delv'd an' plantit,
He whistled, and was weel-contentit.

An' then the simple plays an' ploys,
The healthfu' games an' hamely joys!—
A present pleasour to the mind,
They left nae efter-sting behind.
The time were surely idly spent
To speak o' preachin's fra' the tent,
O' kirns an' foyes an' penny-waddin's,
An' back-en' midnight masqueraddin's ;
An' Hallowe'en sae blythe an' merry,
An' the daft days o' Janiuary ;
An' pranks an' plays at Beltantide,
Wi' frolics noos an' than beside.

And auld-warld cracks an' eldritch stories
O' wizart caves an' haunted corries ;
An' eerie tales o' water witches,
That to the foord decoy'd puir wretches ;
An' lang accounts o' doughty deeds,
By heroes wroucht in yetlin' weeds
For puir auld Scotland's honoured sake
When Scotland's Freedom was at stake.
Then chiefly in the lang forenicht
Was tauld the tale o' Wallace wicht—
Hoo like a lion roused he rose,
An' rush'd on his insulting foes ;
Before his glance like deer they fled,
Behind him lay a line of dead—
Till, breathless from the chase at length,
He sought the woods to gather strength,
Whence issuing ever and again,
He bled an' battled to the en'.
An' here the tale would tak' a turn
To Robert Bruce o' Bannockburn ;
How through the lang eventfu' strife,
Ere glory crooned his later life,
He rather chose the woods and caves
Wi' freedom an' his band o' braves
Than sit upon a silken seat
An' wear a crown at Edward's feet.

Or aiblins that daft lassie, SANG,
Would slip unseen among the thrang

O' lads an' lasses busy jokin'
 Roun' the wide ingle at the rokin'.
 Tho' snaw-white was the robe she wore,
 An' strung wi' gold the harp she bore,
 She mair than tholed the reek an' coom—
 The auld clay-biggin was her hame!
 She micht hae sat in city ha's,
 An' listened to refined applause;
 But dearer to her heart the cot,
 The kintra, an' the puir man's lot.
 She sang to children o' the soil
 The dignity of honest toil,
 The independence o' the mind,
 An' better days for a' mankind.

She sang o' love and youthfu' joys,
 O' friendship's frank an' social noise,
 An' toasted in her moods o' glee
 Scotland wi' a' the honours three.

She sang auld Scotland's broomy knowes,
 Her tourin' hills where heather grows,
 Her glens to youthfu' memory dear,
 Her burnies wimplin' thro' them clear.

She flang owre cairn o' mountain stane
 Familiar wi' the midnight's maen,
 Owre moory monumental fiel',
 Owre river wi' its ruin'd peel,
 A beauty mair than sun could gi'e,
 Or blue-bells noddin' bonnilie.

The glamour o' the vanish'd past
On bare forsaken scenes she cast,—
The licht o' lang-descendit suns,
The wail o' lang-exhaustit wun's,
The shouts o' heroes in the dust,
The gleam o' glaives noo red wi' rust.

At ither times, late i' the gloamin',
When win's aroon' the wa's were roamin'—
Like warl'y cares aroond a mind
To heaven's high will serene resigned—
While slept the heavy-laboured young,
And owre the fire the auld folk hung,
A holy radiance would illume
The cottage wi' a gowden bloom,
And i' the midst would seem to stand
Wi' peacefu' olive in her hand,
A matron of supernal air—
RELIGION was the name she bare.

Nae mere emotional face had she,
But a clear intellectual e'e,
Where Faith and Truth, as from a dookit
Or open lattice-window, lookit.

Her lips, o' gracefu' curve divine,
Had that placidity of line
Whose sweet severity alway
Repels the rude and awes the gay.
Hie was her broo an' fair to see—
A temple of serenitie,

On whilk a glance, how short soe'er,
Dispell'd the faith-disturbin' fear,
An' gave the heart a lively sense
Of peace an' patient confidence.

She spake wi' calmness o' the grave
As of an entrance gate that gave,
Withouten tax of man or toll,
Admission to the ransom'd soul—
Admission purchased with a price,
To the fair fields of paradise.

Her teachings nourished hopes sublime
Beyond the dreams of earth or time ;
Before their brilliance paled away
Sceptres an' swords of widest sway,
The flashing crown, the purpled robe,
The glory of a conquer'd globe.

Nor less the splendour of a name
Hailed by a wondering world's acclaim,
For triumphs nobler than the swird's,
Achieved by noiseless thochts an' wirds
In the much wider world of mind,
Unenvied fell their hopes behind.

The boast of rank, the pride of state,
The airs and orders of the great ;
The cushion'd coach, the silken bed,
The prancing steeds, the banners spread ;
The flash, the glitter, an' the glare,

The brass, the glass, the trumpet blare—
What were they but a toom pretence,
The fleeting shapes an' shows of sense?

Not more enduring by a day
Than the puir cottar's hodden gray,
His staff, his bannet, an' his plaid,
The sweaty emblems of his trade,
His horny loof, his thristly soil,
His back sair bent wi' lifelong toil,
His bitter cares, his vexin' crosses,
His disappointments, pains, an' losses.

Wi' a' their prizes, a' their pains,
Their petty losses, paltry gains,
Th' allotted threescore years an' ten—
What were they after a' to men
Whas view of human life was less
A tent life in a wilderness
Than a short passage owre a muir
To mansions waitin' them secure?

Present abasement they could bide,
Sustained by a supernal pride;
For were they not the absent heirs
Of heaven, predestinated theirs?
The exiled children journeyin' hame
Of a great Prince of powerfu' name?
Yea, were they not upon the road
Princes and priests disguised of God?

The present age, I maun alloo,
Is keen an' cultured in its view,
Sherp to spy oot, an' sure to damn
The hoar hypocrisy an' sham
That in the silent growth o' years
Deform wi' superstitious fears
The purest faith, the noblest truth,
That ever cam' fra' human mouth,—
As ye have seen the lichen hide
The ootlines o' the sculptor's pride.
But, oh ! I canna but lament
The slackenin' o' a' restraint
Halesome to social life ; but chief
The rootin' up o' a' belief
In life on earth to heaven translated,
In God, and man as God-created ;
Nor least that reverential tone
Of oor grave elders changed or gone.

Others there are, but these the chief—
Licence, irreverence, unbelief—
Evils that follow in the train
Of forms exposed and held as vain,
Tho' cherished long, to suit the gentry
Of this omniscient nineteenth cent'ry.

In thae auld days noo on the wing,
In thae auld ways I've tried to sing,
The youth of Scotland's hopes were reared,
An' Scotland's ancient name revered.

Dear were her mountains, knocks, an' knowes,
Her fells an' forests, haughs an' howes,
Not for their natural beauty only,
Or grandeur, lofty, grim, an' lonely,
But that they were an heritage
Bequeathed by men from age to age,
'That greatly daring grandly stude,
An' bled an' bocht them wi' their blude.

Thus were those feelings kept alive
That still for independence strive
Against a power that would control
Freedom o' body, mind, or soul.

Thus, too, the passion was begot
That Scotsman feels for brither Scot
When they amang the frem'd forgaiter,
Tho' perfect strangers to ilk ither ;
For they were rear'd on common fare,
An' breathed the same wild mountain air,
Their hearts wi' mutual memories glowed,
Their blude wi' kindred instincts flowed,
Their sympathies in common ran,
Their likes an' dislikes were at wan.

But wae befa' the weary toun
That brought the sad reverse aroun',
An' lowsed the tender social ties
Wherein a nation's vigour lies.
It like a black-wamb'd speeder flang

Its telegraphic wires alang
The fields where rural industry,
Maist like an unambitious bee
Contentit wi' a modest spoil,
Had humm'd sae happy at its toil.

It laid its lines o' iron down,
An' sallied forth wi' clatterin' soun',
Wi' puff an' snort an' startlin' shriek,
Envelop'd in a cludd o' smee—
To scare the little folks¹ awa',
To bleck wi' coom the greenwud shaw,
To fill the youthfu' peasant breast
Wi' discontentment and unrest,
An' drag sweet Innocence within
The city's whirlin' gulf o' sin.

A panic owre the kintra spread,
To towns the simple peasants sped,
Where, disappointed in their dreams,
They listened to the wildest schemes,
An' crossed the ocean faem to find
Nae hame like what they left behind.

O then was heard by foreign streams
The exile's wail owre vanished dreams ;
An' nichtly to their dashing wave
Perhaps some banish'd bard would rave—
The blindin' saut tear in his e'e—
O' Devon haughs or links o' Dee.

¹ The fairies.

The lesser venturesome that stei'd,
Gaed wanderin' thro' the kintra wide—
Here for a year, an' there for twa,
As flittin' fortune seem'd to ca'.

O thou accursed lust of gain,
For whilk we madly strive an' strain,
What offerings on thine altar laid,
What sacrifices maun be made!

And a' for what? It's no' in gear—
It's no' in cent per cent per year—
It's no' in gowd although we hed it—
The wise can see't, the rich hae said it—
It's no' in mountain heaps o' wealth
To purchase happiness an' health!

But what avails this lang narration,
This protest an' expostulation?
Oh, Ichabod! The better plan
Were just to end as I began—
To note the waefu' change, an' cry
The guid auld times are a' gaun by!





SCOTTISH PROVERBS.

IF the chief object of definition is to furnish information, there is no need to define a proverb, since everybody knows what it is. This conclusion is so far satisfactory that it gives relief from the difficult, if not impossible, task of framing such a logical definition of a proverb as will receive general assent. The task has been tried, but never yet successfully achieved. In this respect proverbs are like poetry ; both are at once generally recognised when genuine, but their strictly essential qualities have never yet been precisely determined. In the absence of definition, descriptions of the proverb abound. One writer pleasantly observes that there are not more proverbs than there are attempted definitions of them. Some of these attempted definitions, or descriptions, are expressed so epigrammati-

cally, or come so near the general conception of the thing they describe, as to be worth remembering. The popular idea of a proverb is perhaps met by representing it as a short saying that easily and pithily, or at least picturesquely, expresses some universally recognised and generally applicable truth. It is the revelation of a diamond which flashes truth from many facets. The late Earl Russell's description puts the popular idea with a happiness that has never been quite matched. He describes a proverb as 'The wisdom of many and the wit of one.' Bacon's description is not so neat but more philosophical—'Proverbs,' he says, 'preserve the genius, wit, and spirit of a nation.' There can be no doubt that the character of a nation is strongly written in its proverbs, whether they have been invented or adopted. Of foreign descriptions of the proverb, that of Cervantes, the most famous literary celebrity of a country which may be regarded as the very home of the proverb, is too characteristic of that great author not to be quoted—'It is,' he says, 'the short expression of a long experience.'

All thoughtfully taciturn people, whose motive in speech is to come to the point, and not to set out at all if there is no point, naturally fall into a habit of framing proverbs, or using those that have been so framed as to answer their purpose. Hence it is that the Spaniards, who are by nature

grave, dignified, and decorous, converse so largely in a language which may be described as silence relieved by oracular utterances that rather suggest thought than encourage speech. Hence also that habitual resort to the authority and economy of the proverb which is characteristic of the rural, and especially the pastoral, population of our own country. Talking becomes an easy art, often a mere trick, in busy societies, involving in the majority of cases little outlay of energy in either brain or tongue ; but in the solitary areas of the country, in the ploughing field, and especially on the pasture hill, the means of acquiring the use of a quick and copious phraseology are scarcely to be had, and it is not without mental and physical effort as well, in the representation and enunciation of their ideas, that rustics can carry on a conversation. It is easier for them to think than to speak, and it is to their credit that thought with them preponderates over speech. The result is their formulation of the commoner experiences of life into proverbs or proverb-like expressions, and their free use of the saws and maxims which tradition has sanctioned, and which time has invested with an authority little inferior to that of Scripture. By means of these portable propositions, capable as they are of daily use and various application, they save themselves the trouble of searching for

and arranging unnecessary words, and have thus, as almost their only effort, in serious conversation among themselves, the free exercise of the judgment in the selection of that particular proverb from their store which will give precision and force to their meaning when their own proper words feebly convey an incomplete idea. Proverbs are, in short, the bank-notes of speech, conveying much value in small compass, current all over the country districts, and credited wherever they come.

A language which, though still in active use, has reached the stage beyond which, for whatever reason, there is no further external development—a stage at which the vernacular of Scotland seems to have arrived—is peculiarly liable to run into such crystallised forms, and to develop internally into a multiplicity of such idioms as border on the province of proverb. A language in this stage, if it has proved its capabilities by a worthy literature, is permanently classical. Composition in it can hardly be original ; it can be little more than a clever but still mechanical combination of approved phrases. Latin composition in our schools and colleges is nothing more than this: at best it is a patchwork or mosaic of idioms, and favourite quotations, and such turns of expression as one finds in their original beauty in Cicero, Livy, and Cæsar. There has been little liter-

ary development of the Scottish language, except on the prose side, since the time of Burns. Wilson, in the '*Noctes Ambrosianæ*,' has occasionally shown with triumphant success the capacity of a long sentence in the Scottish tongue for the conveyance of elaborate description, subtle sentiment, and even abstruse metaphysical thought; but a Scottish epic, or even a seriously descriptive poem of real originality and commanding force, longer than the '*Cottar's Saturday Night*' — '*Kilmeny*,' perhaps, excepted—has not been written, and the time for the production of such a poem is past. The language has reached its limits. It is in the stage when only idioms, and such-like idiomatic expressions as proverbs and popularly - expressed poetical sentiments survive in the speech of the people. The rest falls into disuse, and ultimately into oblivion.

Probably the proverbs, and the songs, with certain favourite and readily quotable passages from Burns, will be the longest-lived and last portions of the wreck of the Scottish language. Of these, at the present day, where Lowland Scotch is yet spoken, the proverbs are not the least vital. They are very well worthy of preservation for several reasons. First and foremost, they deserve to be perpetuated for the practical wisdom they condense, fit for '*human nature's daily food*,' quite independ-

ently of their Scottish origin. Then they discover those traits of character which are distinctive of the Scottish nation, and by which—presenting as they do the springs which regulated the national conduct—the nation may be judged. And, in the third place, they give valuable historical glimpses, in an incidental and therefore trustworthy way, of the manners and customs of our national ancestry.

There may be some three or four thousand native or naturalised Scottish proverbs in all, and if, as has been calculated, the European world contains an aggregate of between thirty and forty thousand, Scotland, with her tenth-part of the sum total, has no reason to be ashamed of her contribution to the general store. The Scottish proverbs may be variously classified. A very large proportion of them, to judge from the imagery they employ, are of rural growth, and of these again many are unmistakably of domestic origin. Some have for their object the inculcation of the social virtues. Some are philosophical, and the philosophy is often presented in the form of a paradox. Some are humorous or sarcastic revelations of character. Some encourage thrift. Some encourage enterprise; and so on. It is not proposed in this paper to do more than just look at a sample, selecting,

however, only such as I have recently heard in common use among country folk.

They've ill will to ca', that lets the gad fa'.

The duty of the goadsman, it may be pointed out, was simply to urge forward the oxen while the ploughman guided the plough in the furrow. Burns, it may be remembered, in the enumeration of his farm servants for the surveyor of taxes, wrote to the astonished official:—

'For men, I've three mischeevous boys,
Run deils for rantin' an' for noise;
A gaudsman ane, a thresher t'other,
Wee Davoc hauds the nowte in fother.'

But in Burns's day horses had mostly¹ superseded oxen for ploughing, and 'gaudsman' had become equivalent to ploughmen.

An ill-gated coo had aye short horns.

This means that it is fortunate that those who are disposed to do mischief are usually denied the means to do much.

The king's errand may come in the cadger's gate.

That is, the least likely people may sometime have it in their power to aid or to injure you.

Corn's no' for staigs.

¹ Not entirely; 'owsen frae the furrow'd field' were still returning 'dowf an' wearie, O.'

It is too expensive provender for colts, which are well enough at pasture.

I'll no keep a dog an' bark mysel'.
If folk counted a' cost (*risk*) they would never put
plough i' grund.
The maister's foot's the best muck (*manure*).

The last of these refers to thorough supervision by the farmer himself if he would have his farm prosper.

Like's an ill (*indefinite*) mark amang ither folk's sheep.
An ill (*unskilful*) shearer never had a gude hyuck.

The reaper puts the blame on his sickle.

A fou man an' a fastin' horse mak' haste hame.

The antithesis here is less complete than the words seem to convey.

Dinna meddle wi' the deil nor wi' the laird's bairns.

All these proverbs are redolent of rural life and rustic occupations.

The following are illustrative chiefly of domestic life.

A wife's ae dochter an' a cottar's ae coo—the ane's never weel, and the ither's never fou.

The foot at the cradle an' the hand at the reel is a sign o' a woman that means to do weel.

The thrift o' you, and a dog's woo, would mak' a braw wab.

The cloth would simply be invisible, like the

King's new clothes, in Hans Andersen's famous story.

Naething's to be dune in haste but the grippin' o' fleas.
Mair haste, waur speed, quoth the wee tailor to the lang thread.

He should sit still that has riven breeks.

Every crow thinks its ain bird whitest.

He has cowpit (*emptied*) the meikle pat into the little.

That is, he has made a poor exchange or a bad calculation who, etc.

A good 'social' proverb is,—

Tell the bourd but not the body.

That is, tell the joke if it is worth retailing, but reveal no names among friends.

Of 'character' proverbs here are half-a-dozen,—

They speak o' my drinkin', but ne'er think o' my drouth.

Send *him* to the sea, he'll no get saut-water.

He'll tell't to nae mair than he meets.

Wha can help sickness? quoth the drucken wife, as she lay in the gutter.

His eggs ha'e a' twa yolks.

They're far ahint that canna follow.

And here are a few paradoxes,—

God help great folk, the puir can beg.

He has a guid judgment that doesna lippen to his ain.

He has come to gude by misguidin'.

He that gets forgets ; he that wants thinks on.

Thrift is an outstanding feature of the Scot-

tish national character. With the kindred virtues of caution, prudence, and patience, it has been so long in general practice as to have become a kind of second nature to the nation. They are probably right who trace it to its origin in the poverty which, before the Union, was the chronic condition of nearly all ranks of the community, and which of necessity demanded a careful economy of small means for the bare benefit of existence. Happier times came, when there was no longer absolute need for its practice ; but it continued as a habit, and here and there discovered a tendency to parsimony. Hence it is that while some foreign writers, in estimating the national character, give the Scots credit for a wise economy, others reproach them with the practice of an excessive frugality. As Mr Punch puts it,—‘They keep the *Sawbath*, and everything else they can lay their hands on.’

If the proverbs of a country reveal the character of its people—and few will doubt that they do—this feature of the Scottish character should be reflected in the national proverbs. As a matter of fact, the subject of a very large proportion of these proverbs is the doctrine of thrift, and the best means of attaining it. Take the following specimens :—

A bit is aften better gi'en than eaten.

In this example, it must be owned, hospitality is advised on prudential grounds.

It's ill brocht but, that's no' there ben.

This reminds one of the English truism [that you cannot both eat your cake and have it. It is scarcely necessary to say that, in the familiar cottage arrangement of a but and a ben, the but contained only what was for daily or immediate use, while the ben held the luxuries and the savings.

A broken kebbuck (*cheese*) gangs quick dune.

This is the converse of a well-known economical maxim, and might be rendered,—

Take care o'the pound and it will take care of its pence.

He that has twa hoards will get a third.

And—

Put twa pennies in a purse, and they will creep thegither, should recall the remark of Shylock in the play,—

'Is your money ewes and rams?' asks the merchant; to which the Jew replies, 'I cannot tell—I make it breed as fast.'

They ha'e need o' a canny cook that ha'e but ae egg for their dinner.

Along with this may be taken the companion proverb,—

Better a bite for breakfast than want a' day.

Deal sma' and serve a'

is a good specimen of a rhyming proverb. Proverbs were originally meant for the ear and the memory, and were therefore furnished with such mutually suggestive terms as rhyme and alliteration supply. Some one has fancifully but aptly compared rhyme to wings, upon which truths may fly from mind to mind ; and alliteration to claws and talons, by which they may cling securely wherever they come.

A handfu' o' trade is worth a gowpen (*two open handfuls*) of gowd.

That is so, because trade is like a spring from which there is a continuous stream, while a sum of money not adventured in business is like water in a barrel—there is no more when it's done.

Get your rock and spindle, God will send tow ;
along with which may be taken,—

What better is the house though the daw rises sune.

The former clearly means that the opportunity comes to those who are ready to use it ; the latter seems to signify that the opportunity is of no value unless it is, as Dr Watts would say, *improved*. A man may rise early and have a long day before him, but he must do more than chatter—he must 'put to' his hand and work—if he would prosper. To these might be added,—

A gaun (*going*) foot gets aye gate aneuch,

that is, there is always plenty to do if a man is willing and in the way of it ; and

The drucken man gets the drucken penny,
which seems to say, though by means of a metaphor which our teetotal brethren will hardly admire, that willingness to accept a favour is often the condition of getting it. The drinker never refuses a dram.

Dinna sell your customer wi' your goods.

He won't return if once taken advantage of.

Broken bread maks haill bairns.

Better a clout on than a hole oot,—

but, of course, best of all is whole cloth. This thrifty proverb recalls the delightful domestic picture of 'The Cottar's Saturday Night'—

'The mother wi' her needle an' her shears

Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new.'

Better rue sit, than rue flit.

In the words of Shakspeare—

'Rather bear the ills we have

Than fly to others that we know not of.'

An unce o' mother wit is worth a pund o' clergy.

There is nothing in this comparison odious to the 'clergy,' as we understand the term. As a rule, the clergy are let alone by the proverbial sayings of Scotland ; like the 'corbies,' they are acknowledged to be a shot richt kittle (right difficult). The proverb means that a little

common-sense is of more practical value than a load of learned lumber ; 'clergy' here meaning book-learning, or knowledge as distinct from wisdom. There is no depreciation of the benefits of a good education in the proverb ; Scotland has always been alive to those benefits.

A bread hoose ne'er skails.

This proverb means that good servants remain where they are well fed, and generally well treated. The economical value of the advice which is implied in the proverb is apparent.

Double drinks are gude for drouth,

that is, they are effective in creating drouth : they are therefore false economy. This proverb limits the application of the preceding one in the direction of undue liberality.

When the barn's fu', ye may thresh afore the door.

Dear bocht and far socht—that's meat for ladies.

Ye needna gang wi' the rake after the besom.

And many others.

Another feature of the national character is strongly presented in the Scottish proverbs—namely, that sturdy independence which refuses respect to rank unless rank is accompanied by sterling worth,—which, in short, judges men by their manhood. It is the feeling which Burns has hit off so admirably in the well-known lines,—

'The rank is but the guinea-stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that.'

The following two or three specimens will suffice to illustrate this trait :—

As gude may haud the stirrup as he that louns on.
Ye're come o' bluid ?—sae's a puddin'.
An owre croose king never reigned lang.

And, perhaps, in one aspect of it,

I'll no' lout sae laigh (*stoop so low*) to lift sae little.

The Scots are credited with a spirit of enterprise and perseverance which, under failure, finds refuge in a philosophical patience that must not be mistaken for contentment. Illustrative of their enterprise and perseverance the proverbs give us—

Aft ettle (*try or aim*), whyles hit.
Hankerin' an' hingin' on's a puir trade.
He that forecasts a' perils will win nae worship.
A gangin' foot's aye gettin'.
A wicht (*capable*) man ne'er wanted a wappin.
Do your turn weel an' nane will speer what time ye took ;

and perhaps—

A gude fallow ne'er tint but at an ill fallow's hand.

Illustrative of their philosophical patience, we have—

Better be blythe wi' little than sad wi' naething.
Ye'll win owre this trouble, an' be waur aff.

Better a toom hoose nor an ill tenant.
Fling-at-the-gaud (*kick at the pricks*) was ne'er a wise ox.
Be thou weel, be thou wae, thou wilt not be aye sae.

. There are many others.

This paper may be closed with a few proverbs that refer to law courts and kirks.

Hame's hame-like, quoth the deil in the Court o' Session.
Abundance o' law'll no' brak it.
It's an ill cause that lawyers think shame o'.
Ane o' the Coort but nane o' the Coonsel.
I may like the kirk an' no ride on the riggin'.
The kirk's meikle but ye may say mass i' the end o't.
The Lord gie us a gude conceit o' oorsells, quoth the
wife, an' gaed whustlin' ben the kirk.





HOLIDAYS.

IT is usual to regard the annual holiday as an entirely modern institution, at once a result and a proof of our superior civilisation. On this subject of the origin of holidays the general public, being of a non-scientific cast of mind, and careless of causes if the result is acceptable, are little inclined to trouble themselves. To them the annual holiday is a very pleasant and present fact, and, while they are quite willing, in the manner of Sancho Panza, to bless the man that invented it, they pass on, like him, without further inquiry to the enjoyment of the invention. It is, therefore, in vain that parsimonious Paterfamilias, to whom holidays mean increased expenditure, grumbles forth his chronic discord amid the household harmony—that holidays are a wicked waste of time; that there was no such thing when he was

a young man; and that the world was much better off without them. There is no attempt to examine his logic, or lay siege to his position. He is allowed to retain his position, and launch his protest. Enough for the young people, Materfamilias, and Mrs Grundy that the annual holiday is now universally recognised as a respectable institution, and that it is very enjoyable. The sanction of antiquity could not further strengthen their desire, nor further confirm their determination to celebrate it.

It may well be questioned, however, whether the view of the purely modern origin of holidays is the correct one. One is disposed to find in them the expression of a very natural and very strong instinct which would seem to be coeval with human nature itself. If sleep be an invention, it may be conceded that holidays are so too. But if the desire for sleep is an essential instinct of our physical life, in scarcely a less degree is the desire for holidays the same. Relief from monotony, rest from the routine of toil, recreation after waste, are the boons of both. Holidays, in short, are to the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year what sleep is to the four-and-twenty hours of the day. If this be so, one would expect history to support the thesis. And this we find history quite prepared to do. We need not go so far back as to the Garden of Eden, when life was one long holiday—for which

we have still to pay ; nor to the patriarchal age, when life was one long leisure time that waited only on the increase of flocks and the growth of pasture, and knew nothing of railway trains and telegrams ; but look at the Exodus, and say if the loss to Egypt, which it entailed, was not the consequence of a purblind policy that condemned to incessant servitude a nation of valuable workers, the main and prime cause of whose revolt would have been removed by a statutory holiday ? The laws of Moses wisely provided national festivals to relieve the monotony of the year ; and what was the weekly day of rest but a recurring *holiday*, which safeguarded the physical as well as the spiritual needs of individual and national life ? But let us keep to our own island, and interrogate the ancient authorities whether holidays were known in their day. Why, the earliest piece of English literature really worthy of the name is based upon the fact of a great annual national holiday. What are the *Canterbury Tales* but an expression, not less historical than literary, of the joys and pastimes of a series of holidays already, half a millennium ago, regularly established in our country ? What were the nine-and-twenty pilgrims but a band of holiday-makers ?—and, to our thinking, a much pleasanter mode of making holiday they had, in those days of yore, under the direction of mine host of the Tabard, than

their representatives the unhappy pilgrims of to-day, who are hurried through half-a-dozen countries in as many days, under the discipline of one of Mr Cook's Mr Greathearts. The institution of holidays is not, therefore, a modern invention, but is as old as history itself, and may, on that account, be regarded not unreasonably as the necessary outcome of an instinct implanted in human nature.

It is worthy of remark that the great holiday season in our country long ago was in the end of spring, or rather somewhere on the border between spring and summer, when the first delicious freshness was still on the leaf and in the air. Dan Chaucer is picturesquely particular on this point. It is, he tells us, when the sweet showers of April have moistened the mould ; when west winds, no less sweet, have breathed a new life through plantation and over plain ; when the sun has gathered a fuller sheaf of beams, and shows a more golden round ; when little birds make day and night melodious with their recovered art, that 'then longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,'—which, in nineteenth-century English, simply means that then everybody is thinking of holidays. The differences between then and now are merely incidental to our altered ways of living. We take our holidays later, as we dine later, than did our ancestors. There are a few other things, no doubt, in

which we are behind them, but in the matter of holidays we have several sufficient reasons, not to be exhaustively specified here, for preferring August and September to April and May. It may be pointed out, however, that with the modern system of agriculture, which requires for the green seed a continuance of that attention which, in the earlier months, was given to the sowing of the grain, it would be ruinous for the husbandman to go holiday-making in spring. But in Chaucer's day, potatoes and turnips were unknown in the country, and when 'the ploughman,' that is the small farmer, had scattered his seed in the furrows—'rattled it ower the rigs,' as Burns in an age of greater pressure has phrased it—he was free both in mind and body to mount his mare and make one with his brother the parson in a holiday-trip to Canterbury.

A prominent, if not the first, feature of the modern holiday is the temporary change of domicile which it seems to demand—with, in many instances, a temporary change of costume, presumably suggested by the altered circumstances of the wearer. Great is the variety of resorts in which our holiday-makers find their pastime. The moors, of course, take up quite an army; the streams bring out our contemplative men in numbers that augur well for the amount of thought in the nation; the lochs re-

ceive their willing but pensive prisoners ; the unfrequented but fragrant hedgerows and the forest purlieus give cover to solitary new-wedded pairs, shy lovers of nature, and business people who hasten from the clamour of streets to the contrasting silence of wildernesses ; the seaside is invaded by millions who daily lead an amphibious existence, one foot on sea and one on shore ; and the sea, as is to be expected in an insular country like ours, is witness to innumerable embarkations that are neither commercial nor military. In short, as is the race of birds, such, in the holiday season, is the race of men. 'Some to the holly hedge nestling repair, and to the thicket some ;' others are to be found 'far on the grassy dale or roughening waste ;' some 'in solitude delight, in shaggy banks, steep and divided by a babbling brook whose murmurs soothe them all the livelong day ;' while others 'love to take their pastime in the mountain air, or skimming flutter round the dimply pool.'

There can be little doubt that the individual, and therefore the nation, which is an aggregation of individuals, is all the better for holidays. They increase the amount of human happiness, not in participation only, but in anticipation and remembrance as well ; and happiness is a healthy moral condition which generously influences the judgment and civilises the manners.

Their effect upon the physical well-being of the community is so obvious as to call for little comment. Health is wealth of the best kind, for it implies an effective continuation of the means of production, mental as well as manual. It is to accumulated wealth what the bubbling spring is to the full cistern. The cistern may give the impression of a vaster store, but the spring, though petty in appearance, has yet the capability of supplying innumerable cisterns. Happiness and health—these two are by common consent the best of blessings ; they are largely the product of holidays.





A HOLIDAY IN ARCADIA.

THE time is ten years ago, at least. There are three of us who have conspired to take a roaming holiday, and country-like we have come up to town merely to take our departure. But we have also to settle a trifling matter—the direction of our flight. The horizon is around us; imaginary invitations are held out to us on all sides; as soon as we accept one, the rest of course are virtually withdrawn. It is delicious to have all those offers. We will decide at the last moment. Our baggage is as light as our hearts, and consists chiefly of a flask and a pipe; inspiration gurgles in the one, music exhales in visible arabesques from the other. The weather is summer weather—let it rain, let it shine, let it do both together; if there be one thing we abhor it is monotony.

A plateau existence is purgatory. Mother Nature is in her gala gown, the lightsome Lincoln green; Father Jove has donned his sky-blue vest. Do you not see his cerulean swallow tails streaming in the high ether? If he but show us as much of the blue as make a pair of O-no-we-should-not-mention-'ems, what more could heart desire? Off we go! Whither? No matter where!—north, south, east or west. Out of the island? No! The Rhine is, the geography books say, beautiful and romantic; we will match it with the Tweed, and the Tay, and the Nith and the Spey, and a hundred others. The Alps are sublime, and toss their heads to heaven; but we will leave them to the Alpine Club, and keep our admiration for our own native Anakim, our Loch-nagar and Morven and Macdhui, and Ben Lomond, Ben Ledi, and Ben-an, and other Bens and Benjamins by the score. As for lacustrine scenery, commend us to our own Scottish lochs. We have nothing to say in dispraise of Como and Maggiore, of Geneva and Constance; but we have an inexhaustible series of our own whose fairy nooks no single life (nor married) can ever wholly explore, whose grandeur and awe our souls can never cease to worship and tremble before. And we owe it as patriots and possessors of the little island that is the central gem of the inhabited globe to reckon up our

diamond lakelets and prize them as brilliants of the first water (which they are) — our Lomonds and Levens, and Katrines, ay, our savage Loch Marees, and our bare and lonely Lochs of St Mary.

But here we are at the Waverley Station, Edinburgh, and the booking-clerk is asking us with a soupçon of tartness in the tone (how we love the Doric in all its moods and tenses!) if we think we shall have made up our mind within a couple of hours? Thus pushed to the scratch we seek to identify ourselves with the party that has just preceded us, and ask for a copy of the last issue, not knowing what that was even remotely. At once that booking-clerk is metamorphosed—he stands to us *in loco* Fate, his dating-machine gives the irrevocable click, and here is our *tessera*—PEEBLES!

‘Peebles for pleasure.’ Peebles then is the very place for us ‘on pleasure bent.’ Has it not been immemorially associated with pleasure and play? Was it not to the south of the Forth what ancient Falkland was whilom to the north—one of the merriest burghs that ever welcomed King James of poetic memory? How goes the old ballad?—

‘Was never in Scotland heard or seen
Sic dancing and deray,
Neither at Falkland on the Green,
Nor Peebles at the play.’

And then it is a gateway into the calm sad scenery of pastoral Scotland, over which hangs a heaven of purest poetry.

And this is the Tweed—the glorious river of Scottish romance!—whose steel-clear waters make once more their melody in our ears. Not *that* the mere sound of sliding waters, such as the love-lorn wanderer hears crying through the wilderness of the New World. It is the voice of Eld, conning over, with total disregard of the present, its many waning memories. There is a sadness in the tone, which the river has caught from its long and intimate association with vanished man. All the voices of Nature are originally cheerful: where they are tinged with melancholy man has been there to change the key, and disarrange the primal harmony. And well, O Tweed, may thy song sound in our hearing with something of the character of a lament; for thou, for many a century bygone, hast witnessed alike the oft-repeated follies of human passion and the transitoriness of earthly renown! Where now the moon-lighted moss-trooper of the old Border days?—the men-at-arms, the mail-clad knights of the age of chivalry, who have spurred along thy banks, time-hallowed river—who have swum on errand of love or war thy tranquil waters, or, it may be, have mingled their life-stream with thine? The

heedless river keeps on its unintelligible murmur ; it will not share its secrets. Ask we, then, yon ruined tower on the river-brink—Neidpath Castle—over whose crumbling walls floats in this morning air neither

‘ The Silver Cross to Scotia dear,’

nor the Ensign of St George, but the mildewed flag of a power beneath which even nationalities decay—the black banner of Oblivion ! The tongueless occupant, staring from the mouldering loophole where haply the fragile bluebell is nodding bonnilie, frowns inexorable refusal. What ! shall Oblivion seize all ? Arise, thou champion of our claims on the past, and, like one of thine own unconquerable knights, illustrious Scott, do battle in our interests against Oblivion for the fading memories of ‘ Scotland’s elder day.’ Mow down these nettles in the courtyard, and fill the enclosure with horsemen and spearmen, the neigh of steed and the bay of hound ; re-erect that fallen roof-tree, and make its timbers ring to the rough Border song, the warrior’s boast, the lover’s toast, the clinking of cannakin, and the laughter emptied from lungs familiar with the mountain air ! Who comes crashing through the pliant willows on his fiery charger, and is already stemming the mid-water of Tweed on his headlong errand ? It is Will of Deloraine ! Listen ! that is the twang of the

aged minstrel's harp, and see where his long white beard is flowing on the breeze. There glides like a ghost the far-travelled Palmer; you may know him by the cockle-shell sewed in his hat, and the faded palm-branch in his hand. For

‘How should we the Palmer know
From another one?
By his cockle-hat and staff,
And his sandal shoon!’

What earthly image shall best represent Time? The hills? They are old, but immortal, and deck themselves every summer in the garb of youth. The Heavens? They are from everlasting, but dowered, too, with undying beauty, and young with the lustre of eternal lights. The hills and the heavens are the symbols of immortality. It is among the creations of man we must look for the presentment of Time. And what more impressive image of Time could be found than yonder ruined keep of Neidpath Castle, that looks blankly at us from the opposite bank of Tweed? There we have the past visibly imaged in stone and lime—rigid, but with traces of decay; silent, but substantial before us. How purposeless and out of place are those walls of eleven feet thickness, that dungeon, that draw-well, with the Tweed so near! The powerful Frasers six centuries ago, the Hays

of Gifford and Tweeddale later, and later still the Douglasses of March lived and gave law and luxuriated there; and who now inherits their castle? A simple gamekeeper, who needs neither the security of such walls nor can summon terror from the dungeon.

For one association Neidpath Castle is ever affectingly dear to the imagination. The scene is a window of the Castle, and Ellen Douglas—‘O, call her fair, not pale!’—worn and wasted by disease, looks forth, impatient of her exiled lover’s return. The dark but now relenting shadow of her father hovers in the background.

‘Earl March looked on his dying child,
And smit with grief to view her—
“The youth,” he cried, “whom I exil’d
Shall be restored to woo her.”

‘She’s at her window many an hour
His coming to discover;
And *he* looked up to Ellen’s bow’r,
And *she* looked on her lover.

‘But, ah! so pale—*he knew her not*,
Tho’ her smile on him was dwelling—
And am I then forgot? forgot?
It broke the heart of Ellen.’¹

Not for feudal splendour, old Tower, nor Royal visits, nor sorties nor sieges, but for the broken heart of a tender maiden—tender and

¹ Campbell.

true, as befits a Douglas—is thine image dear to gentle minds. A love that is stronger than death is stronger and more lasting than the memories of power and pride, and the monuments of battle. Earl March's daughter is more to posterity than the mailed Earl and all his retainers.

It was our purpose to cross the hills to St Mary's Loch. The distance by the map seemed not more than we could cover in three hours. It only remained to find the path of communication. We necked an urchin who was speeding past bare-footed and vociferous of joy, and he sent us down the water to the bridge by way of initial movement. Arrived at the bridge, we accosted an idler, who would have sent us back again to ascend the hills by the Manor water; but we objected to patrolling the banks all morning, and were glad to act upon the instructions of a plaided shepherd, who, with the dew of the hills on his whiskers, came up at the moment on his way to Peebles show. At first, indeed, Tityrus rather confused us by a copious flood of topography, but at last, with a happy abandon of minutiae, he directed us with a sublime index to the hill ridges that rose due south of us, saying, 'In fack, ye maun *mak'* your road, an' they a' meet on the taps yonder. Ye'll be for Tibbie's, nae doubt. Frae the tap haud sooth,

an' a wee thocht wast. What needs names to strangers? Gude day to ye !'

This little hillside planting confines the Tweed from view. What a humming in the lown wood among the wild flowers at the pine-tree roots. There goes a red-endie pop into our ear. Jupiter tonans! what a thunder he makes. There, he has now got entangled among the meshes of our beard. Bizz-zz-zz! Will he use his poniard, think you?—for he is evidently losing his temper. Ah! here he is on *terra firma*—we flung him the metaphorical rope, and now, like a shipwrecked sailor just escaped with his breeks, he sits on our thumb-nail and attends to his toilet. See, how he feels all down his sides for broken bones; not a rib is fractured. He expands his 'sheeny vans,' and with somewhat unsteady flight, off sails our bold aerial voyager.

Now, gents—*Arcades ambo!*—while the angler is busy below, and the bees around us; and the linties, mavises, and merles aboon us are singing and whistling, and generally—as cheerful Allan Ramsay has it—'chirmin' owre their pleasant rants,' we also ought to be doing our best to earn the repose that comes with the cool smoke at gloaming; therefore DRAW! UNCORK! DECANT! Nectar! the drink of the gods of ancient Hellas, and the sons of modern

Scotland! Now, my co-mates, and brothers in travel, that sup has washed down the last sooty flake from our craigs that kept us in mind of Auld Reekie. Now shout with clear pipes; shout round us, let us hear you shout, ye happy shepherd boys! Mercy on us, what an echo! An echo! Leap for your lives, ye sons of Arcadia; ditch, and hedge, and stile. Well hopped all! What horns; and a tail that might thresh corn or mow syboes; but mark his eyes; they are red and lowering, and gleam like the opal with imprisoned fire. At last Taurus sullenly retires to his favourite feeding-ground; and we start for the watershed like roes.

Simultaneously with our departure from the path the wind freshens and frisks wildly around us—here twitching at tufts of the brown bent, there shrilling through dark-green ‘sprots,’ as if in jubilation of companions. How it blows over the bare glen of Hundlehope, and catches us with skelping strength on the flank of the ridge! Pater, who has—such is the force of habit—brought a tall hat into these upland solitudes, is unmercifully badgered by the breezes. How they twit him about his hatter, and how continually he keeps doffing to them in acknowledgment of their attentions! Held in his hand even, that hat is covetously grabbed at, the while gust after gust screams on its ram’s

horn around his undefended capitol. The useless headpiece is finally transferred to me as armour-bearer, and complete defiance offered to Æolus and all his vagabonds by the assumption of a deep, well-fitting Kilmarnock! This is doubly secured by means of a white handkerchief tied turbanwise round the temples. He seems like one of Prince Charlie's followers, broken and bandaged, but still with a keen desire for safety, making his way over the mountains from Culloden to his native clachan.

Neck and neck we have attained the summit. And here let us call a halt, for we are at the door of Nature's private boudoir, and must not rashly invade her privacy. Mark these deep trenches, these treeless *cul-de-sac* glens, that are scooped out on the hillside up which we have just climbed. The marks these of winter torrents—when the hills acquire a voice, and that trebling streamlet, trickling down the shingly slopes in a bed a world too wide for its shrunk waters, swells to gigantic dimensions, and fills the hollows of the uplands with the horror of its bass. This is a nursery of rivers. Hence 'rivers, here but brooks, dispart to different seas.' But look south, and east, and west! Hill-back rises above hill-back like a huge company of discomfited Titans. Not a tree, not a bush—nothing to diversify the view but height and a darkening towards the hollows far as the

eye can pierce—a multitudinous sea of hill-tops, silent as the deep sea bottom. And there is more in the simile than at first blush meets the eye. For it is indeed an old sea bottom, and once slept as placidly under the unmoved world of waters as now in upper air. Where, indeed, has ‘that blue destroying dragon, the sea, whose vocation it is to eat up the land,’ *not* been?

‘Oh, earth, what changes thou hast seen ;
Even where the long street roars, has been
The silence of the central sea.’

But the natural changes, the catastrophes, the cataclysms, the convulsions that have successively thrown back the cosmical beauty of earth re-adorning herself under the slow but kindly law of evolution—back to primeval chaos—while they excite our wonder and fill our minds with awe, have, after all, less interest to us than the vicissitudes of man among the scenes of Nature, and the vicissitudes among the scenes of Nature as under the dominion of man. These pastoral hills have been wandered over by Celt and Roman ; Arthur’s own knights have viewed their outlines and held them dear ; Culdee and Covenanter have blessed their verdure with the print of their hallowed feet ; the tragedies of rival loves among peaceful shepherds, and Border feuds among reiving mosstroopers, have been enacted in their solitudes. Bear witness,

chronicle of monk and history's page, and many a floating ballad. Not alone, then, are these uplands pathetic in their bareness and loneliness with

‘ The grace of forest charms *decayed*
And pastoral melancholy,’

but with the entrusted secrets of generation and generation—secrets of friendship, love, religious faith—of disloyalty, hatred, and violent death!

‘ Oh, that some minstrel's harp were near
To utter notes of gladness,
And chase this silence from the air
That fills the heart with sadness !’

There is wheel-track no longer, my merry men, so now for the hawk's flight straight for St Mary's Loch. How goes the sun? We have it! Slide your eye down our finger, and follow the direction to yon white motionless cloudlet that seems like a forwandered lammie reposing on a lone hillside. Right below lies the eye of these pastoral hills, looking up a very sapphire to the sapphire heavens—St Mary's. Look out for bogs, haggs, morasses, marshes, runnels, and well-e'es. Off?—Ic, ic, irr-r-r! Whirr-r-r! Gor-r-oc-oc! wheep-whee-cep — whee-ee-cep! pee-ee-weet—p'weet! Crunch! sh-sh-sh! crack—thud! Who's that stopping the procession? By Jove! over! We're down, all three on all fours. Who said there was a silence in the

lonely hills? Never was heard such a confounded row in the Cowgate on St Patrick's Day in the morning. Grouse, partridge, black-cock, whaap (uneuphoniously called curlew), snipe, plover, shingle, rocks, waters, legs, arms, bodies, and a rattling as of violently dislodged teeth! Two sit up and look around, gasping; *one* leaps aloft as if he beheld a rainbow in the sky. He declares that he has lost skin, refuses to localise the loss, but only fears he will have to take his meals standing for some time to come. We notice a rent, and the revelation of a silver lining. Off again we go, our disabled comrade prudently in the rear. It's a regular steeplechase, a broose! Panting we arrive at the brow, where birks and dwarf-pines begin to appear; another bound, and, lo! like a cradled child, St Mary's Loch, slumbering at noon-day among the mountains. We shout not, lest we awaken the infant Naiad. Rather, like Vasco Nuñez (and not, as Keats has it, Pizarro, though he was as great a man), we

‘Gaze with eagle eyes,
Silent,’

upon the miniature Pacific hushed in the arms of the grey old hills.

Descending the green slope to the Yarrow Road, we find ourselves in the narrow glen of the Meggat, with the Meggat itself trotting

along by our side. The 'amusive tinkle' of its shallow stream is blown unbroken to our ears with the blended hum of bees revelling in the thyme, and the rustling, as of silken dresses, among the tall grasses that are ever bowing gracefully in their sober glee. By-and-by the 'tinkle' is silent, as the stream tells down its tributary crystal to the lake. For we are now at the head of the loch, and may either continue our journey down the margin to where the classical Yarrow—*fabulosus amnis*—begins to draw its line of silver from this upland urn, or turn aside to the right and cross the bridge between the sister lakes—she of the Lowes and St Mary—to Tibbie's immortal change-house. Sweeter scenery, we well know, would greet our hungering senses, a broader expanse of waters, steeper hills of more emerald green, and 'the pomp of cultivated Nature,' were we to follow the former route. We should be more in the centre of the classical lowlands strolling through the farm land of Altrive and gazing down 'the dowie dens.' But Moffat, ay, Lockerbie, must be reached ere falls the gloaming grey. Still, let us pause, and allow the pros and cons for either route to decide it among themselves in our unconscious mind. Meanwhile stretch we our limbs among this fragrant grass on the fenceless roadside. Felt ye e'er such elasticity in sofa, couch, ottoman, or settee? Well might

that true worshipper and waiter-on of Nature,
William Cowper, say of his active years—

‘No sofa then awaited my return,
No sofa then I needed.’

We seem to be buoyed up upon air. Not the slightest sensation of an earthly or material presence affects our back as we lie extended, looking up into the stainless heavens. Up! we are looking down—down through limitless depths of blue into the concavity of space! We are reposing on a cloud. We are unconscious of anything but thought and sight—transcendental both, for neither has an object. We think of nothing; we see nothing. Thought requires exertion, but our brains are passive; colour requires variety, but all that we see is blue; and so blotted from our memory are past experiences that the blue is colourless, for it is the all-prevailing absolute blue! The wind has fallen; the clouds are folded; Apollo sits supreme in some distant region of the sky; we are in eternity! Are we not some disembodied spirit that knows nothing of its past, and fears nothing of its future—to whom there is an unpassing present of passionless repose? We are beyond the despotism of space and time; we are unconditioned; we are escaped, lost, in the infinite silence!

There shot a hawk athwart our line of vision. How majestically does that small bird of prey drop down the horizon! Kingly were he beside the hugest gander, for there is fire in his eye and freedom in his wing; he is among the aristocrats of the air; you may observe his high-breeding in the pose of his small head; he has drunk the fierce draught of liberty! How easy might imagination transform him into Jove's own proud bird, the imperial and imperious eagle!—the bearer of the forked arrows of lightning fast griped in his talons, sitting majestically beside the father of gods and men: Jupiter, meanwhile, gazes lazily down from his empyrean 'girdled with the gleaming world' upon the petty affairs of men.

But yonder among the trees on the lake-edge shines Tibby's cosy cottage. At one stride we are over the bridge, have opened the rustic wooden yett, and have walked up the pretty gravel path bordered with all the hues on the July palette of Flora, queen of flowers, and into the little parlour. We hear the clicking of the drowsy old clock as we cross the threshold, and immediately on entering the tight little room, a big bluebottle, scared from his contemplation on the porcelain brow of a statuette of Christopher North adorning the mantelpiece, incontinently, and with much wrath in his bum, flies out at the open lattice, and we hear him

grumbling till he is a good half-mile away down the water side. Shade of the crutch-bearing Kit of the North! What malicious hand, in what evil hour, hath been here to damage the salient promontory on the landscape of thy regal countenance? Christopher without a nose!—worse by far than ear-cropping, for the want of these ‘side intelligencers’ thy luxuriant locks might conceal—as did those of De Foe. An enemy hath done this, and the intense brutality of the malignity savours of Cockaigne. Some impudent Cockney smarting under some well-deserved castigation, personal or inherited, hath so wreaked his puny spite on our dead Scottish Lion. We hope the creature’s mauley suffered when it dared the sacrilegious blow; and, as we live, here is a drop that looks of a dingy sanguine hue. Fe-fo-fum, we smell the blood of a—Cockney!

We are so far unfortunate that we are not to look upon the face of our venerable hostess to-day. Age rather than infirmity—she is well over her ninetieth year—is beginning to tell on her enfeebled frame. What a link is she to the generation of last century! Waterloo! She had been ten or fifteen years a grown woman before it was thought of. What faces dear to fame—but now no longer shining upon earth—has it been her lot to look upon. The great Sir Walter, the manly Wilson, the buirdly Shep-

herd ! strong and active, vigorous and full of life ; and she has outlived them all. Another such term of years as her life has reached would take us back to the landing almost of the Prince of Orange.

But here comes at last a ‘neat-handed Phillis,’ and as we are going to dine—silence for the space of one hour ! The man that would interrupt the serious duty of eating with the small change of his talk has got not only an ungrateful stomach, but an uneasy mind. Let no such man be trusted.

Here on the grassy beach of lone St Mary’s let us with grateful heart and haggis recline among the scented verdure, and drink in at every pore the sweet influences of the season as they silently ply their ethereal tasks in sky, on land, and on the liquid element. Brought on a level with the greensward—which somewhere, sometime, we humbly and reverently hope to lie at rest beneath—the grass-blades fanning our face, and the lithe grass-hopper chirping at our ear—saw ever any man such beauty of form, such variety of colouring among the wild-flowers ? Where have our eyes been all day that we saw not the beauty that was flinging itself so lavishly under our careless feet ? But now we bethink us, the hills we have just crossed are quite destitute of flowering

herbs. Green, green as the dewy hills of Ireland were they, but their monotony of hue was unbroken by the white enamel even of the universal gowan, and it is too early for the purple gleam of heather. It seems to us—and we are rather delighted with the fancy—that all the wilding children of the Scottish hills—the hardy, gentle, graceful, uncared-for, yet affectionate little flowers of the wilderness, each with her bonny bit of colour—her blue, or red, or yellow, or white—have come tripping down the shingly mountains and by the dry grey cairns like fairies, as they are, to wash their bit faces, and in innocence of heart gaze at their own loveliness in St Mary's. Here is their rendezvous—nay, their habitation, for too well do they love the Mother Lake ever again to leave her. Now if an artist could transfer this square yard of floral form and colour to canvas, and could so improve on his art as to communicate their gentle swayings, their languishing leanings, their saucy airs—what a power were his! and what a boon were the achievement all the year to some city-pent lover of Nature! Here is meadow-sweet, and mill-foil, and pile-wort—nay, rather let us give them the names our mothers taught us to know them by—yarra, both pale and blushing, with its fringed leaf; queen o' meadow and celandine; crow-foot and marigold; the bluebell, swinging dreamily on

its delicate, inky-blue stem ; the bonnie gowan with its clean white mutch—‘wee, modest, crimson-tippit floer ;’ the larger oxlip and buttercups ; and even ‘the rough bur-thistle spreading wide’—the ‘symbol dear’ of auld Scotland, and a flower, and a right royal flower it is, sturdy and independent, yet domesticated among the tender flowerets that put their trust in its thorny shadow.

We will give a guinea to the man who can tell us which day of the week it is. A week-day we are half-convinced it must be, but the calm around us is the reverential composure of Nature keeping Sabbath among the hills ! Surely there is a divine Spirit in the wilderness—such as the gentle poet of the Lakes found in the ravished hazel wood. The man that would kill a gowlock here were guilty of murder. Why hear we not the ‘church-going bell ?’ Yonder is the little temple where our shepherds and shepherdesses of the district meet to worship. How tranquilising to the mind the very view of its silent spire ‘pointing to heaven like the finger of God,’ as seen among the encircling bushes across the placid lake. Community of worship here !—what a blessed thing it must be ! The solitary lives of the communicants must make them open their hearts with a sympathy towards each other unknown among the too often cold and indifferent congregations of towns. Here, with Cole-

ridge, we could say that it were a goodly thing

‘To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly companie ;

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each on the great Father calls—
Rich and poor, and high and low,
And youth and maiden gay.’

We quote at least the sentiment.

But we must be ‘up, Timothy ; up with our staff and away !’ And yet, before going, there is one thing we should not like to omit noticing. It is in connection with the bareness of the scenery, both of hill and lake, which has been in our vision most of this day ; and the strange fascination which the scenery, in spite of its bareness, has had upon the imagination. We mean simply to notice the phenomenon. Each poetical visitor to these pastoral uplands has prefaced the account of his experience with the question—*And, now that the visit is an accomplished fact, what, after all, is it that I went out to see ?* That is the plain prose of their experience. Of course the Sons of Song put it more melodiously. Hear Wordsworth :—

‘What’s Yarrow, but a river bare,
That glides the dark hills under ;
There are a hundred such elsewhere
As worthy of your wonder.

Be Yarrow stream unseen, unknown ;
It must, or we shall rue it ;

For when we're there—
'Twill be another Yarrow !'

And again when, eleven years later, he did venture to see it, and to know it in reality, in spite of the warning given him by other visitors as well as by his own prophetic heart, he says,—

'And is this—Yarrow ? *This* the stream
Of which my fancy cherished
So faithfully, a waking dream ?
An image that hath—*perish'd* !'

Now, contrast the disparagement and disappointment respectively in these two quotations with the following expressions, by the same poet, of praise and of unanticipated pleasure. First,—

'Earth has *something yet* to show—
The bonny holms of Yarrow !'

And secondly,—

'I know, where'er I go,
Thy *genuine* image, Yarrow !
Will dwell with me to heighten joy,
And cheer my mind in sorrow !'

Now, hear Professor Shairp,—

'Will ye gang wi' me and fare
To the bush aboon Traquair ?
Owre the high Minchmuir we'll up and awa'
This bonny simmer noon
While the sun shines fair aboon
And the licht sklents saftly down on holm and ha'.'

Then comes in the spirit of Peter Bell, if Peter had one ; he pokes in with his gruff interrogatory,—

‘ And what wad ye do there,
At the bush aboon Traquair ?
A lang dreich road, ye had better lat it be ;
Save some *auld skrunts o’ birk*
I’ the hill-side lirk,
There’s nocht i’ the warld for man to see !’

But the poet made the pilgrimage, and, though Peter was indisputably, in the gross sense, correct in his croakings of bareness and uselessness, the poet, moreover, was satisfied. Let us ask him, and listen to his reply,—

‘ And what saw ye there,
At the bush aboon Traquair ?
Or what did ye hear that was worth yer heed ?
I heard the cushies croon
Through the gowden afternoon,
And the Quair Burn singing down to the vale o’ Tweed.

‘ And birks saw I three or four,
Wi’ grey moss bearded owre,
The last that are left o’ the birken shaw,
Where fond lovers did convene
Mony a simmer e’en—
Thae bonny, bonny gloamings that are lang awa’.

‘ They were blest beyond compare
When they held their trystin’ there,
On thae greenest hills shone on by the sun.’

Why should we multiply quotations? Have

not the holms of Yarrow been from time immemorial 'dowie dens?' They are 'dowie,' they are 'bare dark hills,' and 'there is nocht in the warld for man to see' at them. That is so ; they are all these through the tameness, and sameness, and *poverty* of their scenery. And the general scenery of the entire stretch of country comprising the South Scottish Uplands, from St Abb's Head, in Berwickshire, to the western limits of Galloway, may fairly be described in the same or similar terms. So that the fascination, the glamourie, is extrinsic—it is communicated ; it is of human origin. The shifting scenes of human life, comedy and tragedy together, enacted long ago in these pastoral wilds, have left their interest, their beauty, their passion shadowed on the hill-sides, and reflected on the waters on and beside which they were, originally and as incidents of actual history, in truest reality represented. These shadows and reflections diversify, as it were, with a subdued chequering of shade and shadow the spectral bareness of a region that boasts no other variety of character.

But lo! what heavenly apparition on the blue bosom of the tranced lake 'comes this way sailing?' Not otherwise into the youthful mind of poet glides the first dawning of fancy's ray. It is the visual presentment of the genius loci—the genie of the lake—the one Being without

whom the region were forsaken indeed—the actual swan of tradition! And, true to the cherished image, the fairy conjuration of poesy—floating double, swan and shadow! With what a stately air the graceful creature moves hitherward, propelled as by mere volition, self-governed without sign or hint of exertion—like Wordsworth's summer cloud that

‘Heedeth not the loud winds when they call,
But moveth altogether, if it move at all.’

What divine arching of neck, what purity of plumage, what gentle rounding of unruffled bosom cushioned on the un murmuring waters! Diana herself among the water-lilies, and without a thought beyond the lovely solitude!

We will in fancy send our eyes over the Uplands of Southern Scotland, from the broad flat crown of Broad Law. We already feel ourselves standing on that sublime solitude, ankle-deep in the short, thick, verdant heather. But how is this? We look round us and round us, facing in succession ‘a’ the airts the wind can blow, and hills we see none; we seem to be in the centre of an extensive plateau, or rather plain—for not at first have we the idea of elevation, and are at last only brought to the conception of a table-land by the extreme fineness of the air which tickles our lungs, fills our brain-cells with

a delightful intoxication, and gives keenness and breadth of range to our eyes. We recollect, however, that we are somewhere close upon a thousand yards above the sea-level, and that therefore this surrounding district that gives us the notion of a table-land intersected by shadowy cuts, and gashes, and trenches, must be after all a series of long broad-backed lesser hills vanishing away—away—till they become sublimated to a blue mist, yet with a clear outline, leaning against the paler blue of the sky. These cuts, which cross the field of our view mainly from south-west to north-east, and which lie like shady lines on the clearer landscape, are then, we know, glens and haughs and valleys, through each of which, though lost to view, winds some singing, shining stream. In yon dark hollow the infant Tweed is shouting in the delirium of newly-found freedom; in this winding glen the Meggat is toying with the wild flowers which the amorous banks hold forth to her in passing; in that fairy strath trips along to the distant Annan the shallow Moffat, unscreened from the morning or the evening sun. Who can count all the lines that, from this commanding Law, are seen to give character, after all, to the somewhat monotonous landscape? And every one of them is a bonny green glen, soberly cheerful with the lulling sound of running water. Suppose these glens filled up, and the voice of the streams

hushed, smothered beneath the superimposed layers of earth—now, at length, you have your flat, unvaried table-land, your raised sea-bottom. Yes! we may believe the geologist—the Scottish Uplands, as well as the Northern Highlands, derived the plateau-seeming character of their surface, which they present to the eye that surveys them generally, from the action of waves and tides—the instruments of destruction of the great leveller, the ocean. Not once or twice in the world's unrecorded history, we may be sure, have these Uplands been subjected to the equalising influences of the sea.

Are not the hills like so many sheep-backs when the dry-stane circular fauld is full of the bleating congregation at merry sheep-shearing times? And do not the valley-lines exhibit the most perfect and natural system of drainage that the most enthusiastic engineer could dream of or devise? An old sea-bottom *then*, a pastoral upland *now*. Then sea-monsters—leviathans, and megatheria, and jokatheria—wallowed in their unwieldy joy among the umbrageous dulse and tangle that overspread yon former ocean-floor; now peaceful sheep and social grouse dot the verdant hillsides, or cuddle and confab together amorously among the darker green of the unblown heather.

But hold! whose statue meets us face to face?

Adrian's or Titus'? No; 'tis that of HOGG. Very proper the feeling that found expression to the Shepherd's praise in stone, and very creditable to our Scottish dalesmen this carved monument in memory of their tuneful brother of the crook. But we question after all the need, not to mention the taste, that placed this lifeless effigy in remembrance of the immortal bard among the hills and waters that are ever lipping—no, that won't do—bleating and swelling the honours of his name. Never shall that day dawn, so long as the Scottish tongue is an instrument of vocal utterance, when the pilgrim of nature, as he journeys through the hallowed basin of the Tweed, shall fail in fancy's ear to hear the blithe—the jolly—Shepherd of Ettrick whistling through his native glens. It's no' beneath the pinnacled monument, nor yet upon the storied stone, but in the affectionate hearts and on the grateful tongues of his fellow-countrymen, and brother dalesmen to all generations, that the name and fame of James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, the author of the 'Queen's Wake,' the father of 'Bonny Kilmeny,' and mony a braw sang besides, shall or should find its most endearing and most undying temple, shrine, and habitation. Would not he himself have preferred as the text for his panegyric his own most melodious lines, so happy in their expression of humble but loving contentment?—

‘Then when the gloamin’ comes,
Low in the heather blooms,
Sweet let my welcome and bed of love be!’

Let us, in the fashion of a Greek chorus, apostrophising the departing Shepherd who has just made choice of his last resting-place both of body and name, say or chant together in conclusion,—

‘Emblem of happiness,
Blest be thy dwelling-place!
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!’

Now, westward ho! for Moffat.

What white flashing yonder breaks in foam down the hill-steep?—and the muffled thunder, that some distance back first broke on our ear-drum a faint, faint sound of ethereal tenuity, the *minimum audible* of sound—can it be our Scottish Staubach, our Velino? Already the bass is losing its force, being smothered with layers of intervening air—we know the wonder, and pass it in no contemptuous mood, for we have felt its beauty and its power, and have gazed erewhile on the ponded tarn from which its waters leap, like another Anio, in foam—the dark giving birth to the fair, the dead to the living, the night to the glorious dawn. We have not forgotten the black rocks that ‘frown round dark Loch Skene’—grand in their gloom, miserable in their melancholy, sullen in their strength, guarding with a jealousy that is border-

ing on anger, the unsunned waters lying at their feet, gift-given into their charge long æons ago by some translated glacier. But let the rocks and the hills stand firm—motion and music are the natural attributes of the water; and see where she steals with gentle cunning through the terminal moraine, and in glad experience of freedom, escaped the shadow of the parent rock, leaps into the valley and the sunshine, and streams down the long green glen singing on her seaward way! So from the sunless harem of some jealous Turk the fair, young, newly-arrived captive escapes by the lattice to the arms of her Frankish lover! Not otherwise from the shuttered house of Shylock tripped forth into the moonlight the lovely Jessica, and sought love and liberty with Lorenzo in the gardens at Belmont!

'Tis time, before we pass from their sterner features, to notice the walls—the green hill-walls—of the glen we are speeding down so noiselessly. In the upper end the scenery is sufficiently wild and lofty to be suggestive of a real Highland glen. The braes are not so uniformly green, not so rounded, and less gentle in their acclivities to stand as the typical braes of the Scottish Uplands. It is hardly fair—indeed, quite incorrect—to call these slopes 'braes;' they are the flanks of mountains. Look up! there is a good long ascent, and the

angle of elevation with the horizon cannot be less than thirty degrees ; it looks nearer forty. Notice yon black escarpment on the brow of the hill—these knobs on the hillsides—these long breadths of shingle—these big angular blocks of detached stone at the bottom of the glen. We have seen little of these signs—so distinctive of true Highland scenery—to-day. In other respects, however, the upper end of the glen borrows none of the traits of northern scenery. It is still of a prevailing green—the green of short natural grass, unvaried by the taller fern and bracken, unrelieved by the purple of fox-glove, blue-bell, or heather-bloom—treeless and bushless, save by the burnie-side ; and even there, bush and tree are a scanty product. By-and-by, however, as we journey down the glen, signs of cultivation begin to relieve the monotony ; here is a delightful and fertile haugh waving with the bearded barley ; yonder the stream is screened from Apollo's burning glances by the cool dark green of a grove of alders ; woods begin to appear ; farms, mansion-houses, and country-seats. We turn a bend in the road, and, lo ! the chimneys of Moffat and sunset on the mountains.

There is more of poetry, philosophy, and religion awakened in our souls by the declining than by the ascending day. Dawn is an incentive to action ; sunset conduces to contemplation.

Dawn makes us in love with the fair earth, our temporal habitation ; but the cloudy splendours of the setting sun raise our thoughts to 'cloudless skies aboon.' Light—at all times holy—seems (in the language of George Eliot) 'holier in its grand decline.' The poets have ever been in their happiest moods at evening, for then poetry and religion are at one. Even the devotee, the priest of the sensual gods and goddesses, Eros and Dionysus—Venus and Bacchus—turns from his idols to the contemplation and worship of a purer and more exalted divinity—

'When light with parting beam delays
Among the opening clouds of even,
And we can almost think we gaze
Through golden vistas into heaven—
Those hues that mark the sun's decline,
So grand, so glorious, Lord, are thine !'

But what pen or pencil shall dare to copy the glories of yon sunset ? Can only the mysterious power of memory take in and retain for us the divine grandeur of yon blending of mountain, cloud, and light ? We must be dumb, for we are no poet, and none but a child of genius can adequately describe a sunset. Let us be silent, then ; or, if we must have yon splendid poem, written in characters of the sun against the western firmament, set to earthly music ere it be quite forgotten among the children of men, let us listen to the sweet notes of the American

quaker poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, who alone, in our estimation, has as yet with some degree of success sung the glories and interpreted the mysteries of sunset—

‘Touched by a light that hath no name,
A glory never sung,
Aloft on sky and mountain-wall
Are God’s great pictures hung.
How changed the summits vast and old !
No longer granite-browed,
They melt in rosy mist ; the rock
Is softer than the cloud ;
The valley holds its breath ; no leaf
Of all its elms is twirled—
The silence of eternity
Seems falling on the world.

‘The pause before the breaking seals
Of mystery is this—
Yon miracle-play of Night and Day
Makes dumb its witnesses.
What unseen altar crowns the hills
That reach up stair on stair ?
What eyes look through, what white wings fan
These purple veils of air ?
What Presence from the heavenly heights
To those of earth looks down ?
Not vainly Hellas dreamed of gods
On Ida’s snowy crown !

Slow fades the vision of the sky,
The golden water pales,
And over all the valley-land
A grey-winged vapour sails.

' I go the common way of all ;
The sunset fires will burn,
The flowers will blow, the river flow,
When I no more return.
No whisper from the mountain pine,
Nor lapsing stream shall tell
The stranger, treading where I tread,
Of him who loved them well.

' But beauty seen is never lost,
God's colours all are fast ;
The glory of this sunset heaven
Into my soul has passed—
A sense of gladness, unconfined
To mortal date or clime ;
As the soul liveth, it shall live
Beyond the years of time ;
Beside the mystic asphodels
Shall bloom the home-born flowers,
And new horizons flush and glow
With sunset hues of ours.

' Farewell ! These smiling hills must wear
Too soon their wintry frown,
And snow-cold winds from off them shake
The maple's red leaves down.
But I shall see a summer sun
Still setting broad and low ;
The mountain-slopes shall blush and bloom,
The golden waters flow.
A lover's claim is mine on all
I see to have and hold—
The rose-light of perpetual hills,
And sunsets never cold !'

Beautiful in thought, fancy, feeling, and ex-

pression! Look again at the main idea that gives such lofty and such original colouring to the penultimate stanza. What a graceful concession does the soul in that stanza make to the weak, but after all amiable companion of its earthly exile! Here is that harmony of mind with matter, of soul with the things of sense, where the former yet preserves its legitimate supremacy. Of such a union Beauty is the offspring:—

‘She is the birth
Of the sweet sympathy of man with earth.’

Next morning up early—and away! for though we do not go to bed with the lark we like to rise with him. And yonder he goes, his grey, homely wings transmuted into silver and gold in the red beams of the rising sun. See with what elasticity of motion he leaps up the sky, and mark the tremulous quivering of his wing that thrills in the ecstasy of returning life, and light, and freedom. What devouter worshipper at the shrine of Nature’s great divinity, the sun, will you find among the feathered folk than the laverock? The yellow-billed merle hops from his couch or his roosting-twig close by ‘the hopes of his household,’ and, lifting his liquid eye heavenward through the interstices of his favourite hedge, pours forth his melodious orisons to the great luminary. The mavis leaps forth from his snug cradle in the shelf of the flounced

and furbelowed pine-tree, and straight hies him to the spiry pinnacle of the same, from whence he directs sunward the stream of his praise till the wide coppice rings and echoes to its utmost bounds. And so with the other birds, each after his manner. Some, indeed, such as 'the wren with little bill,' treble out their thin note of acknowledgment in a querulous or mechanical kind of way, while they busy themselves all the time in beginning the petty labours of the day. The 'bird that man loves best, the pious bird with the scarlet breast'—Robin—keeps his piety for winter, and even then it is, we much fear, rather a counterfeit to procure admission to the soup-kitchen, and a claim on the charity of the flannel-waistcoat committee; but in summer he is no hypocrite—on the contrary, he is a shameless little profligate and infidel—a paunchy epicurean—a juicy lover of tit-bits, however come by—a sleek depredator whose crimson expansion of vest and jolly rotundity and unfailing good luck keep him respectable; chickweed, groundsel, and the whole race of seeds generally are for his Fridays, and his Lent, and his physic to diminish his obesity or counteract a threatened plethora of fat things; he prefers fish and flesh to vegetable; he thinks a snail as good as you do an oyster; he loves a dish of vermicelli, 'all alive, all alive!'—he smacks his mandibles over a caterpillar; he enjoys the luxury of the

fluttering butterfly, who is at its wit's end to escape him; he will make no bones, the little scoundrel, of the industrious bee; he says no grace, and returns no thanks; he has no song to salute the reascending orb; his first thought on getting over the bed-stock is breakfast! a devilled kidney or a Scotch collop, with plenty of mustard; or if his wee head is aching after the night's debauchery, a Soda-and-B.! Even the crow—we mean the social rook—the sparrow, and the swallow have a caw, and a chirp, and a twitter in lieu of matin song—brief and too often unmusical though they be—with which, ere they address themselves to their several vocations, they hail the awakening dawn. We except the carrion crow—for his first words on slouching to the doorway of his dilapidated hovel are addressed to his sooty spouse in the question—‘Whar sall we gang an’ dine the day?’ But the laverock, light-hearted, harmless, happy bird—the laureate of the feathered choir—lofty only in his desire and power to be and to express himself as grateful and contented; he ascends in the fervour of his devotion from the lowly plain, above the hedges, and the forests, and the hills, up to the very gates of morning! No Pharisee is this sweet guileless bird—he places himself afar off, for his thanksgiving is not for others to hear, though hear it they do and admire, but is addressed

primarily to his Great Benefactor—the sun. Nor till he has fully told out his orisons—our little plumaged Parsee, whose ancestors had worshipped the Fire-god ages before Zoroaster taught a heathen creed—not till he has unburdened his heart of joy, gratitude, and thanksgiving, does he drop down again to the affairs of earth. Nor does his religion end with the morning song, for he will return again and again twenty times in a day to his tower and temple of praise in the blue dome of the sky. Therefore have the poets loved him, and revealed the beauty of his life to the children of men—Shakespeare, and Shelley, and Wordsworth; these are among the masters of men, but they got part of their teaching from the laverock.

We are now in the valley of the Milk, a tributary of the Annan. Well-wooded is the valley, and patches of pine-wood diversify the surrounding region, yet hardly save the country from being characterised as mainly bare. Bare it may be, but the hilly landscape is clad in a coating of green, whose gloss is untarnished by the smoke of coal-pit or iron-furnace; and now while we view it, glittering in the copious dews of dawn. How brightly against the emerald hill slopes show the trim whitewashed farm-houses. Let us leap this wayside fence on our left as we journey southward, and ascend yon

flat-topped hill which seems to command the adjacent country. It is—you may be familiar with the name—the green hill of Burnswerk, or Birrenswark, for the spelling is various. It is one of the landmarks of Eastern Dumfriesshire. You may remember that Scott, in the most profoundly tragic and pathetic of all his prose-dramas, 'The Bride of Lammermuir,' makes Lucy Ashton the loveliest maiden of the Lowlands of Scotland, reckoning from Burnswerk to Berwick Law. As we climb the soft springy acclivity, look through that clump of firs, and behold the very picture that Wordsworth so graphically describes in his 'Leechgatherer':—

'The hare is running races in her mirth ;
And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist, which, glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.'

Not less observant was the eye of Burns to the habits and manners of the wild animals of his country when, in describing the hare that has just risen from her form, he says, 'The hare is hirplin' down the fur.' Very expressive is the term that here defines the motion of the newly-awakened hare, and very correct ; but our hare is the hare that Wordsworth no less actually saw, only it has got past the 'hirplin' period of the morning, and is taking a constitutional exercise to get up an appetite for those growing turnips whose aroma you may

feel blending with the various breath of the morning.

But here we are at the base of the hill proper—a little marshy—but fear no treachery ; there isn't a single well-e'e to dismay you. Now, gents, we must spiel the hill in good style—so

‘ Without stop or stay,
Up the grassy brae.’

And now—open your eyes and *circumspice* !

High hills in the background to the north—the Lowthers ; high hills in the far west—the ‘hills o’ Gallowa.’ Yonder, among them, but in front, are Maxwelltown Braes ; and a little that way—mark the direction of our digit—Criffel ! Do you know the story of Criffel by which it got its name ? It should have been in the repository of anecdote of Alfred Jingle. England once as hilly as Scotland now, Devil—very odd—no accounting for motives—took it into his head to carry off English hills to Scotland—got them all to the north-west corner—busy carrying over the Solway—used a creel to carry them in—waded—nearly all over—old Scotch wife with sow-back looked out of window—Devil frightened—let the creel fall just as he was landing—there the burden lies—Criffel—*Creel-fell* !

Yes ! that silver streak to the south-west is the Solway. Mark how it gradually widens

seaward till it seems—in the language of an unknown poet—‘to *wed* with the sky.’ Yonder is a tidy bit craft getting out from the little harbour of Annan—they are putting up sail—how her canvas shines like the wings of a sea-gull! Fancy you are in the eighteenth century, and she may prove the Jumping Jenny, in the novel of ‘Redgauntlet,’ returning in ballast to the south side of the firth after discharging overnight her cargo of contraband liquids. But the tide must be going out, for you may already notice a good breadth of gleaming brown sand edging the silver water; the Fiord held a brimmer an hour ago, but you know the rapidity of the Solway tides—‘Love swells like the Solway, and ebbs like its tide.’ Beyond the firth you can clearly descry the seaside hamlets of Cumberland—the morning light is ‘sklenting’ brightly off their slate roofs. Farther distant are the mountains of the English Lake district, some of the loftier eminences you can spot—Skiddaw, Scafell, Helvellyn, etc., and, running away eastward to beyond our view, the blue aerial ridges of the Cheviots—the old boundary line between the rival kingdoms of England and Scotland. Right to our east, from the Lowthers to the Cheviots, lies an extension of the same pastoral region of bare green hills and bare green holms which we saw yesterday from Broad Law top. The southland straths just beside us are Eskdale

(it was this Esk that young Lochinvar stemmed so gallantly) and Annandale with its confluent dales of the Dryfe and the Milk—the latter on our right hand as we look south, Eskdale on our left.

But what long turf-clad ramparts and rounded gowany hillocks are these on the southern slope of the hill on whose level summit we are standing? A freak of Nature they cannot be, for no freak of Nature ever yet manifested itself in mounds so regularly drawn, or so mathematically exact in the figure which their well-defined ridges mark out. The enclosure is none other than the site of an ancient Roman camp. Here you have a fine specimen of the engineering skill of martial Rome and the stability of old Roman workmanship. Even yet, though these earthen works were thrown up seventeen centuries ago, the larger and more important features of the castra-ground stand forth in distinct *alto-relievo*, green from the green hillside. The camp must have accommodated a respectable body of Roman legionaries, for it forms a square of somewhere about or over a hundred yards on the side. A fosse, broad and green, and partly filled up in some places, but never to a level with the surrounding ground, runs round the entire square—a good quarter of a mile—except where occurs the gateways that gave entrance to the fortified enclosure. From the bottom of the

fosse to the top of the mound or earth-dyke which it encloses is a height of about five feet, in some places even more; if you descend to make more minute investigation you will be surprised at the grand scale on which has been executed a work that shows like a Liliputian camp when viewed from the summit of the hill. Yon three dwarf hillocks that stand in line at equal distances on the northern side of the camp, and right in front of the three principal *portæ* or entrances which they were meant to defend, are at least twelve feet in vertical altitude. You notice that they, too, have their demi-lune of fosse protecting their outward slopes. In the north-eastern corner are clear traces of what we take to have been the strongest portion of the camp—the general's quarters, the *prætorium*—though we confess ourselves by the conjecture liable to a home-thrust from some local Edie Ochiltree. Down the very middle of the camp proper runs a rill of purest cold water, not without a suggestion of iron in its taste; and here, also within the camp, is the spring itself, doubtless bubbling up as pellucidly as when, so many many years ago, the heated soldier, Caius or Marcius or Publius, dipped his burnished helmet among its liquid crystal, and slaked his Roman thirst. The whole enclosure, we have already stated, is on the southern slope of the hill, from the top of which its nearest boundary line is dis-

tant some ninety or a hundred yards. It was thus protected from the cold blasts of winter which blow from the north, and lay finely exposed to the rays of the summer sun. We think it was no mere temporary camp, but *stativa castra*—a camp that was used as a kind of depôt, and constantly garrisoned. A line of sentinels on the ridge that begins from Burnswerk would command the motions of an enemy for many miles all round, and could rouse with a shout, or a trumpet-blast, the whole camp beneath from its midnight slumbers. Go where you will in a country that has been subjected to Roman invasion, you will find that the Romans chose their heights of observation and their sites of fortification, with an adaptation of means to ends that, in men unacquainted with the character of the land-surface, cannot but call up our admiration; and the thorough-going style of their work is still visible to us, in roads and walls, as well as in camps, after the passage of nearly two millenniums.

Look southward from Burnswerk top. You can readily guess the route by which the Romans entered Caledonia. On the very ridge of yon distant mountains that shut in our view to the south, and which, we know, run along the western side of Ulleswater in Westmoreland—on yon mountain ridge, at an elevation of in some places twenty or thirty hundred feet, runs

a Roman stratum or road, bearing present witness alike to the indomitable pluck, which no impediment of Nature could daunt, and to the stability of structure, which has lasted for so many centuries, of those early conquerors of our island. That road goes on to Penrith, and thence to the wall of Severus, stretching still, though in broken traces only, from the Solway to the Tyne. Here and there along the line of that road are frequent signs of Roman fortification. From England to Scotland the route which the Romans would naturally take on their first invasion under Agricola, about the year of our Lord 80, is across the mouth of the Esk, where its current is lost in the opening firth, and thence in a line almost straight to our encampment on the brow of Burnswerk. But possibly this encampment was not the work of Agricola, nor, indeed, thrown up anterior to the wall of Severus early in the third century. If the latter supposition—not the most probable one, in our estimation—be correct, then this camp must have been constructed by the last generation of Romans that occupied our country—in other words, some time between the close of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century. We rather incline to think that it was marked out and made during the first occupation of Scotland—that is, between the years 80 and 200 or thereby.

And who shall tell its history since then? Doubtless its existence and signification were well known to the brave Strathclyde heroes, who, thrown upon their own military resources after the departure of the Romans, gathered around Arthur and such as Arthur—whoever at the time might be the champion of ancient British freedom against the encroachments of the heathen Saxons. The tradition of its use and meaning was then fresh in the country. But what, think you, were the ideas of the old Borderers, Scotch or English, as, in their forays upon the territory of each other, going or returning, their line of march took them over these grassy mounds? What should we not give to ascertain the thought of some Geordie Bourne, or other thieving mosstrooper, anent the *raison d'être* of this enclosure, as some moonlighted night or early morning he drove at leisure his lowing booty over the solitary mounds and ditches? Lonely enough, in all truth, they are now. The sheep are feeding tranquilly on their wind-swept herbage. Where, in old old days, salt was used and bread broken daily by trusty brothers-in-arms, the nettle waves its melancholy green—emphatic type of desertion—and the thistle erects its head and flings out its regardless branches on the very walls of the old Roman camp, in sturdy assertion of Scotland's right and resolution to be free!



THE QUEEN'S HOLIDAY.

YE that are lords o' fixed degree,
Ye that are lords by whylies ;
Ye proveses o' rank, and ye
That are but baron-bailies ;
Ye members o' the shires an' brougs,
Win up, an' hud ye ready
To boo your backs an' crook your houghs
Afore your sovran leddy.

Ye ministers and men o' weir,
Peace sodgers an' land sailors,
Auld heroes to the service dear,
An' young anes dear to tailors,
Ye new-made knights an' nobles a'—
She made ye men o' honour ;
Weel may ye rise up in a raw
An' shooer your thanks upon her.

Ye waitin' dames sae dink an' braw
Wi' laids o' costly claithing ;
Ye bonnie lasses, best o' a'
Wi' juist a flooer—or naething !
Ye office wands, an' flunkey lords,
An' pages pouthered meetly—
Noo hud a ticht grip o' the cords
An' guide the coorse discreetly.

Ye college dons, fra proctor dour
To him that but professes,
Noo, noo's the time to tuck your gown
An' draw up your addresses ;
An' let your Latin be as snug
As if she kent the roond o't,
For by my faith she'll lend a lug
An' judge ye by the soond o't.

Ye parsons groanin' aye wi' griefs,
The warld's maybe mendin' ;
Ye lawyers, lay aside your briefs,
Ill-named—they ne'er have endin' ;
An' tak' the hills or tak' the dales
As wild as e'er ye wandert,
Like laddies broken fra the schules
An' free o' stripe an' standart !

An', lastly, ye that flood the street,
A roarin' spate o' people,
Splashed up to wa' an' window-seat,
To chimla-stack an' steeple—

It sets ye weel to mak' the din
Ye may indulge the morn,¹
But dinna loup oot o' your skin,
An' be content wi' roarin'.

POSTSCRIPT.

Ye hills, sune to be blazin' hie,
As if by lichtnin' smitten,
Ye countries scattered ower the sea
That mak' the Greater Britain,
Shout an' shine oot! tell a' that speer,
Wi' a' the speed ye may noo,
That after towlin' fifty year,
Oor Queen tak's holiday noo!

¹ 21st June 1887.

THE END.

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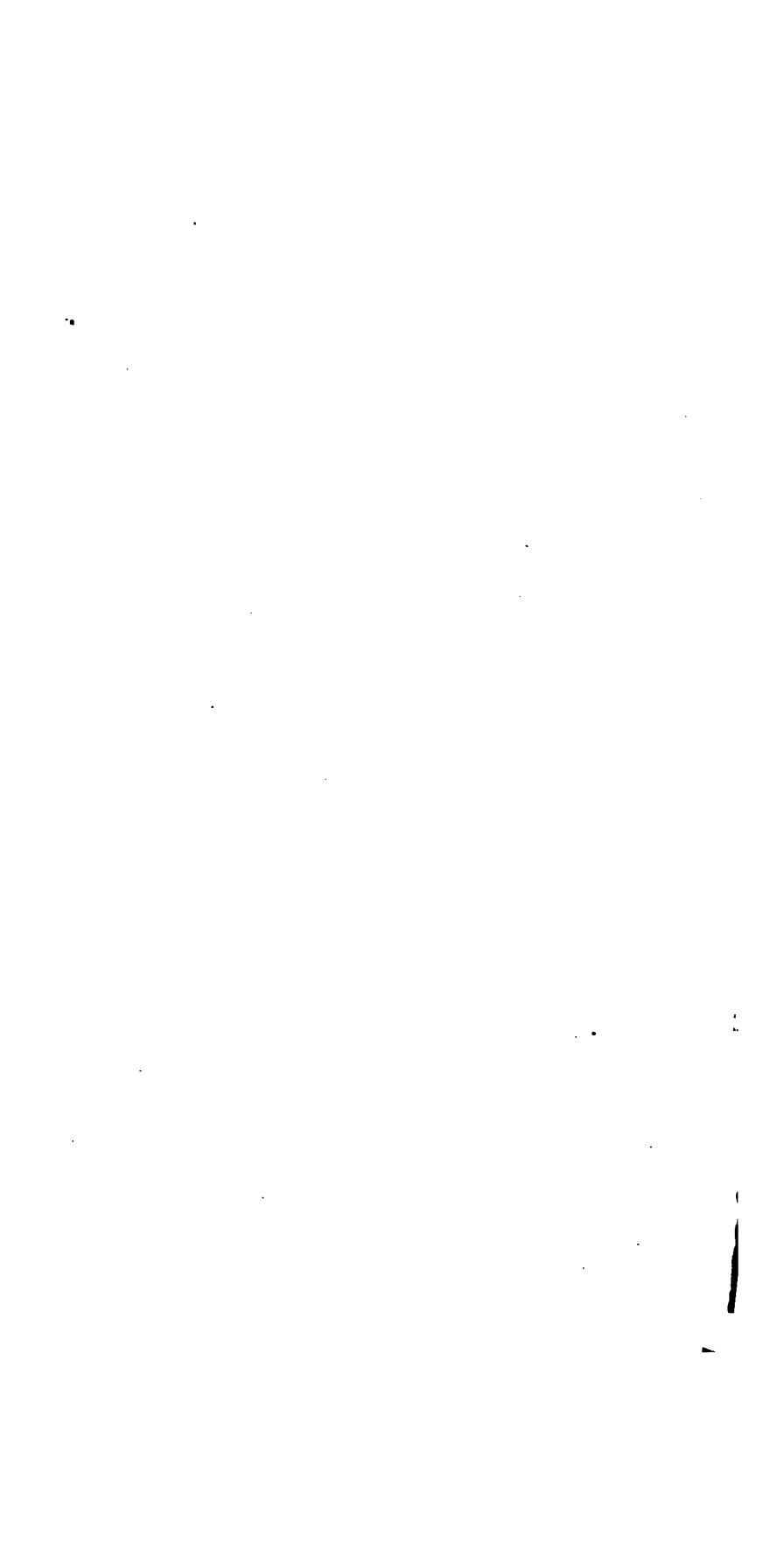
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